

Your life, your way

PSYCHOLOGIES

JANUARY 2016 | £3.99 | UK EDITION

MAGAZINE

TOO MUCH TO DO?

Five ways to beat the overwhelm

COMFORT & JOY

You can thrive this winter

25

reasons why we love **ADELE**

+

THE FORCE BE WITH YOU

A surprising energy trick you're missing

18-PAGE SPECIAL

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Sign up to *Psychologies'* new online course now



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WORTH OVER
£22

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PSYCHOLOGIES

MAGAZINE



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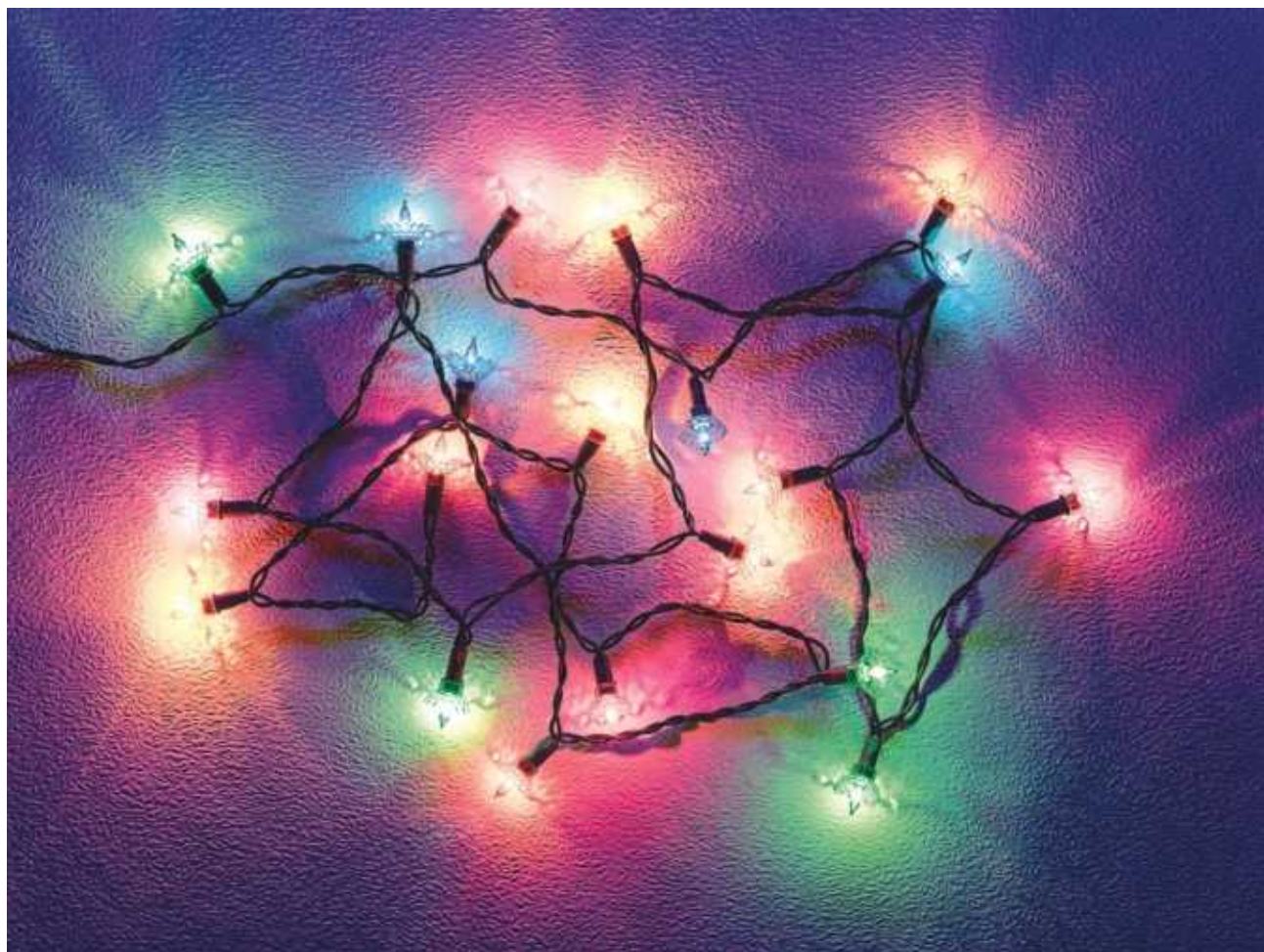
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PHOTOGRAPH: TRUNK ARCHIVE

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“The soul becomes dyed with the colour of its thoughts”

MARCUS AURELIUS

SIGN UP FOR MORE GOOD THOUGHTS: JOIN OUR NEWSLETTER AT [PSYCHOLOGIES.CO.UK](https://psychologies.co.uk)

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

12 issues of *Psychologies* are published per annum

- UK annual subscription price: £47.88
 - Europe annual subscription price: £62.99
 - USA annual subscription price: £62.99
 - Rest of World annual subscription price: £68.99
 - UK subscription and back issue orderline: 0845 241 5159
 - Overseas subscription orderline: 0044 (0) 1959 543747
 - Toll free USA subscription orderline: 1-888-777-0275
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DISTRIBUTION & PRINTING

William Gibbons, 28 Planetary Road, Willenhall, Wolverhampton
WV13 3XT; 01902 730011; williamgibbons.co.uk
Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT;
020 7429 4000; seymour.co.uk

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Meet three of the people who have taken part in the creation of this issue of *Psychologies*



Naomi Elliott

Illustrator

Living and working in London, Naomi is an illustrator whose work has been featured in *The Sunday Times*, *Creative Review* and *Martha Stewart Living*. She reaped the benefits of working on a piece by Rachel Kelly about taking seasonal steps towards a happier existence: 'It's so easy to get swept up in the idea that we have to move forward that we forget to take time to pause and appreciate what is going on around us.' Learn more on page 46.

Leonie Morse

Photographer

When not shooting for editorial or commercial clients you'll find Leonie working on her projects with rockabillies, skaters and teenage misfits. With a drive to capture the true essence of the people she's shooting, Leonie was a perfect choice to work with the women in our 'nourish your love' Dossier. She was inspired by the fact that 'each had made a brave, life-changing decision to improve her love life and happiness'. See the results on page 72.



Lizzie Enfield

Journalist and novelist

When you think of a pilgrim, you probably don't imagine a weary mum dragging children behind her. But journalist, creative writing teacher and novelist Lizzie Enfield is used to challenges: 'My parents believed in toughening us up, so holidays involved a mountain climb or cold swim – clearly this rubbed off on me. Why else would I suggest a no-frills pilgrimage to my two children?' Find out what happened on page 118.

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The power of love

This month, we've put connection and healing our relationships at the heart of our magazine. Research shows that people with strong and broad social relationships are happier, healthier and live longer.

But who wants to live a long life without love? Our culture may measure success on how much you have or do – but at *Psychologies*, we like to think of a loving life as a successful life.

We're talking about a philosophy based on loving kindness, focusing on what we can give, versus what we can get, on choosing to be kind over being cruel, choosing love over fear.

Relationships are not always straightforward though, are they? We have to be brave enough to make ourselves vulnerable, to risk rejection, to let down our defences enough to allow ourselves to be truly seen and be loved for who we really are, instead of who we think we should be. It's not easy.

And there is nothing so painful as when relationships go awry. On page 40, Sophia Smith tackles family rifts in her honest and moving account of how she is trying to find a way to reconnect to a sister she no longer speaks to. If it's your romantic relationship that's out of kilter, then our 18-page Dossier (page 63) can help, with its in-depth look at all the new research on what makes relationships thrive. We are also delighted to launch *Psychologies'* very first online course with relationship expert Sarah Abell. Whatever state your relationship is in, it's the perfect love MOT to take this winter (page 80).

Of course, one of the most important relationships to nurture is the one we have with ourselves. On page 46, Rachel Kelly gives us tips for all seasons on how to love ourselves back to health next year.

And we celebrate the queen of love lost and found on page 20. 'Hello' to you too, Adele! Welcome back, we've missed you.

Suzy



Suzy Greaves
Editor, with Oscar
the office dog

Viewpoint

Let us know what you think of the magazine and each month we'll publish the best letters



STAR LETTER

NICE QUALITIES

Thank you for your article about being able to get ahead while being nice (November issue). I've always been told I need to 'toughen up'. But I'm not tough; I care about people's feelings, I dislike confrontation, and perform best in a positive environment, not a back-stabbing one.

Reading your article was a relief; it helped me to realise I don't need to apologise or be embarrassed. So my goal now is to appreciate my empathy skills more and not resent myself for being what I previously saw as a 'pushover'. **Laura**

PHOTO COMPETITION

Would you like to showcase your talents in *Psychologies*? Each month, we ask you to submit a photo on a theme. We'll print our winner in the next issue of *Psychologies* and on psychologies.co.uk, and the winner gets a prize! The next theme is 'Celebration'. Send your photo attached in an email, with your address, to pictures@psychologies.co.uk by midnight on 31 December.*

WIN!
THIS MONTH'S
STAR LETTER
AND PHOTO
COMPETITION
PRIZE:

Goldfaden
products worth
£92; uk.spacenk.com**

PRIZE
WORTH
£92



THE WINNER THIS MONTH

This photo was taken on a very hot August day in Croatia, on my first visit to the historic, beautiful and busy Old Town of Dubrovnik. The real magic was in the less hectic alleys and stone stairways that led high above the crowds to the top of the city walls. Here, like this bird, I found solitude – so unexpected, I was a few minutes' walk from the hustle and bustle, but felt an amazing sense of remoteness and peace. **Victoria Twigg**

**GOLDFADEN MD VITAL BOOST, £60; GOLDFADEN MD PURE START, £32. *FOR T&CS, SEE PSYCHOLOGIES.CO.UK

EMAIL LETTERS@PSYCHOLOGIES.CO.UK THE THEME FOR THE NEXT PHOTO COMPETITION* IS 'CELEBRATION'. DEADLINE: 31 DECEMBER.



A NOVEL APPROACH

I was interested in the idea of each person writing their own story and sometimes misrepresenting themselves in the process (November issue). The idea of 'the reckoning', 'the rumble' and 'the revolution' appealed so much that I decided to try it.

Due to a family situation, I've felt low for months. I pretended my current situation was a novel and wrote the last paragraph of the final chapter. I worked on two versions; one that outlined what I wanted to happen, another that was more likely. My startling realisation was that both versions would be manageable, in different ways. I had options I hadn't considered and the process made me far more optimistic. What an interesting way to look at problems – pick up a pen and write the ending. **Jo**

SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO

I always look forward to settling down with a new issue of *Psychologies* and a cup of tea; it's like an old friend has come round for a chat and I eagerly look forward to some pleasurable time catching up. I'm going to be off my feet (literally) for six weeks after bunion surgery, and have been planning how I'll occupy myself. I have decided to 'save up' the next few issues so that they will keep me happily occupied while I recuperate. I just need to exercise some discipline now and not dip into them until after the operation! **Miriam**

THIS MONTH'S WINNING LETTER

I'd like to thank...

Dear Lady in the Lift,

You looked over at me and gushingly told me how much you liked my hair, swiftly followed with 'what a cute baby!' when you laid eyes on my son. I replied 'thank you' and managed to only weep a few tears after you'd got out of the lift. My husband understood why.

We were on our way up to the paediatric ward to discuss treatment options with the neurosurgeons. Our beautiful baby boy, who was born at 27 weeks, had developed a condition called hydrocephalus, which was hard to cope with on top of his chronic lung disease. That winter, he barely left the house apart from hospital trips, and with oxygen prongs up his nose, this was usually what people would comment on. You were the first person to see past the tubes and coo at him in a way most people become accustomed to and take for granted.

As for my hair, it took a lot for me to leave my baby boy for a few hours while I went to the hairdresser. I felt guilty and hated to be away from him after months of missing out while he stayed on the neonatal ward.

It must have felt like a small act of kindness, but I can't thank you enough for how much you lifted my spirits on that very dark day. It felt like you were meant to be there.

Three years on, our son has exceeded all our expectations and I am much better at looking after myself. I haven't forgotten your kindness. Thank you.



Crystal

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The Fix

EDITED BY ALI ROFF

News | Reviews | Books | Film | Art | Ideas

“What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness?”

JOHN STEINBECK

For art lovers who are also pressed for time, the democratisation of art through social media means Henrik Uldalen's Instagram account @paintguide is a must-follow. Set up as a platform to share works of art that personally inspire him, Uldalen's account becomes a physical exhibition at Unit London this month, featuring new works by 60 international artists.

Paintguide will be shown at Unit London from 27 November until 23 December 2015. Go to [instagram.com/paintguide](https://www.instagram.com/paintguide)

PHOTOGRAPH: JEREMY MANN



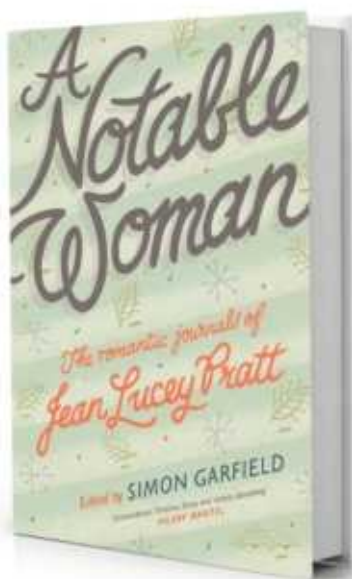
BOOK OF THE MONTH

A NOTABLE WOMAN: THE ROMANTIC JOURNALS OF JEAN LUCEY PRATT

edited by Simon Garfield
(Canongate, £20)

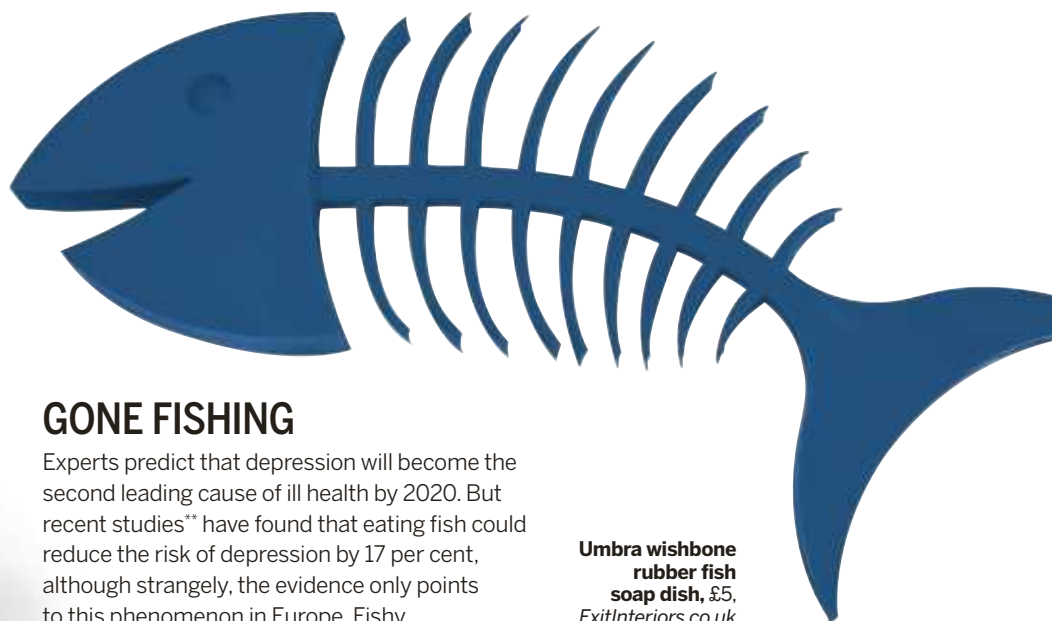
Jean Lucey Pratt began keeping a diary in 1925, aged 15, and continued to write her thoughts and feelings until her death in 1986. The 45 exercise books (edited by Simon Garfield) are full of observations about changing society, attitudes to women in the workplace and living through World War 2, but it's the emotional revelations that sit at the true heart of this book.

Jean charts schoolgirl crushes with a lovely earnestness – she's smitten with her gym teacher – and candidly describes the awkwardness and sorrows of her grown-up love life, which are fraught with unwieldy, unrequited feelings. Gossipy, funny and spirited, Jean's diaries are fresh and wonderfully frank. EF



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Holiday Lemon,
Watermelon
and Lime, £69
each, Debenhams

41% OF US PREFER TO
TAKE MULTIPLE
SHORTER BREAKS
THROUGHOUT THE YEAR RATHER THAN
THE TRADITIONAL TWO-WEEK HOLIDAY,
AS IT HELPS US FEEL MORE RESTED*



GONE FISHING

Experts predict that depression will become the second leading cause of ill health by 2020. But recent studies** have found that eating fish could reduce the risk of depression by 17 per cent, although strangely, the evidence only points to this phenomenon in Europe. Fishy...

Umbra wishbone
rubber fish
soap dish, £5,
ExitInteriors.co.uk

NO CHRISTMAS BONUS? ASK FOR A PAY RISE INSTEAD. TEMPORARY INCREASES, EVEN IF LARGE, HAVE NO NOTICEABLE



CULTURE

Wake up and smell the coffee

From China to Colombia, and Ethiopia to Brazil, photographer Sebastião Salgado, himself native to a coffee-growing region in Brazil, takes us on a global photographic tour of sustainable coffee farming. His stunning photographs reveal the history, rituals and relationships built around fair exchange and quality. You can almost smell the coffee...

'The Scent of a Dream: Travels in the World of Coffee' by Sebastião Salgado (Abrams, £50)

BOOKS TO SOOTHE THE SOUL

WE LOVE: *A Snow Garden & Other Stories* (Doubleday, £9.99)

OUR FRIENDS AT BBC RADIO 4 TELL US WHY YOU'LL LOVE THIS BOOK:

'Christmas is almost upon us,' says Radio 4 producer Gemma McMullan, 'and what better way to spend it than curled up with Radio 4 and a selection of seasonal tales? From an unexpected birth at an airport full of stranded travellers, to a divorced father's wish to give his two little boys a white Christmas, the short stories in *A Snow Garden* delight and surprise, and had me anticipating the festivities anew. Listen to Rachel Joyce performing her gorgeous collection and prepare to fall in love with Christmas all over again!'

You can hear 'A Snow Garden & Other Stories' by Rachel Joyce on BBC Radio 4's *Book at Bedtime* this month, abridged and narrated by Rachel Joyce and produced by Gemma McMullan. Go to bbc.co.uk/books for further treats. Read about a book that changed Rachel Joyce's own life on page 117.



BOOK REVIEW: EITHNE FARRRY FOR STOCKISTS. SEE PAGE 124. *RESEARCH FROM SUPERBREAK. **FANG LI ET AL., 'FISH CONSUMPTION AND RISK OF DEPRESSION: A META-ANALYSIS', *JOURNAL OF EPIDEMIOLOGY AND COMMUNITY HEALTH*, 2015. †CHRISTIAN BAYER, FALKO JUESSEN, 'HAPPINESS AND THE PERSISTENCE OF INCOME SHOCKS', *AMERICAN ECONOMIC JOURNAL: MACROECONOMICS*, 2015.

EFFECT ON HAPPINESS, BUT A LITTLE MORE MONEY DOES BOOST WELLBEING – AS LONG AS IT'S PERMANENT†

THE FIX



Pols Potten
Sunflower mirror
in blue, £78,
Amara

WHO IS THE FAIREST OF THEM ALL?

Believing that creativity, kindness and intelligence can be improved and enhanced is empowering and can propel us on to succeed in our goals, ultimately resulting in happiness. But new research* has found that the opposite is true when it comes to our looks.

Researchers found that women with malleable beliefs about beauty – who believed that with effort they could become more beautiful – were more likely to base their self-worth on looks and are therefore at a higher risk of appearance-related anxiety (interestingly, the results were not found in men). Researchers suggest this could be due to pressure from images of women in the media.

WORK HARD, WORKOUT HARDER

We already know the benefits of exercise when it comes to boosting brain health. But when it comes to memory, it turns out that working out straight after learning can help to solidify the new information in our minds**. Exercise excites the body in a similar way to an emotional experience – and these emotional memories are known to be the most long-lasting memories we can have; we bet you still remember your first kiss, for example...



Nike Women's
Juvenate trainers,
£71.99, Get The Label

3 THE NUMBER OF TIMES AROUND THE WORLD A PERSON WILL WALK IN AN AVERAGE LIFETIME[†]

DID YOU KNOW... WE DON'T JUST GET EMBARRASSED AROUND OTHER PEOPLE, WE ALSO GET EMBARRASSED IN PRIVATE,



FILM OF THE MONTH

Carol

Directed by Todd Haynes

Beautiful, moody and atmospheric, *Carol* is based on the novel *The Price of Salt* by Patricia Highsmith, written at the time under a pseudonym and now recognised as a feminist, lesbian classic. Set in New York in the early 1950s, Cate Blanchett is elegant and mesmerising as Carol, a wife and mother on the brink of divorce who has an affair with much younger shopgirl Therese (Rooney Mara), who is on the cusp of self-discovery. She is a photographer, but avoids taking pictures of people until she meets Carol, who forces her to examine her own desires and understand herself. Their affair is complicated by Carol's husband, who personifies the sexism of the era and the moral taboo of homosexuality, as he forces Carol to choose between custody of her child and being with the person she loves. Subtle and moving, without tipping over into melodrama, *Carol* is a beautiful film about how true love can be risky, but is the only worthwhile gamble. DW

FILM REVIEW: DANIELLE WOODWARD. *OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY. **FIRST REPORTED IN SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN. †NUMBERLAND: THE WORLD IN NUMBERS BY MITCHELL SYMONS (MICHAEL O'MARA, \$9.99). ††ARADHANA KRISHNA, ET AL., "WETTING THE BED AT TWENTY-ONE: EMBARRASSMENT AS A PRIVATE EMOTION," JOURNAL OF CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY, 2015. FOR STOCKISTS, SEE PAGE 124

SCHOOL OF LIFE LESSONS

“Knowing yourself is about asking the right questions – but it’s also about giving yourself the time, space and permission to answer them honestly”

TOM CHATFIELD

Tom Chatfield is an author and faculty member at The School of Life. This January, he leads 'Discover 100 Things You Never Knew about You', part of a series of The School of Life events taking place at Harrods, theschooloflife.com

AS A NEW STUDY^{††} FOUND RESEARCHING PEOPLE BUYING PERSONAL PRODUCTS, FOR INCONTINENCE FOR EXAMPLE, ONLINE

REMEMBER TO EXPLORE

Cornish Coastal Challenge

10–13 June 2016

From spectacular sandy beaches to rugged cliff-top trails – our four-day trek from Lizard Point to Land's End could be your next adventure. Take on the challenge and support people living with dementia.

alzheimers.org.uk/trekking

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Leading the
fight against
dementia

Alzheimer's Society operates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Registered charity no. 296645

DISCOVER
Adventure



FREE
give with confidence

HOW TO...

Keep on keeping on

Wise words from someone who knows a thing or two about never giving up

Cheryl Strayed, author of bestselling memoir *Wild: A Journey From Lost to Found* (Atlantic, £8.99), has just brought out a new book of quotations called *Brave Enough: A Mini Instruction Manual for the Soul*. Here, we share our favourite quotations from her on never giving up, no matter what. Rip this page out, stick it on your fridge, and inscribe these words on your soul.

- 'Every last one of us can do better than give up.'
- 'There is a middle path, but it goes only one direction: toward the light. Your light. The one that goes blink, blink, blink inside your chest when you know what you're doing is right.'
- 'It's folly to measure your success in money or fame. Success is measured only by your ability to say "yes" to these two questions: Did I do the work I needed to do? Did I give everything I had?'

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BOOK CLUB

Dancing in the dark

Elizabeth Heathcote reads an inspirational story about resilience

The year is 1977 and Ann is 11 when her father drops her at off at school one morning, drives away and takes his own life. It is an inauspicious start to anyone's adolescence, and things are only going to get worse. As Ann's mother struggles to cope, they lose their home, and end up sleeping on other people's sofas. Ann sublimates her own grief and bewilderment in the hedonistic

world of punk music, booze and sex. Every time you think that at last things are going to get better, there's another turn of the screw.

And yet, unlikely as it sounds, this novel is uplifting and a joy to read, full of northern grit and black humour (it's set in Stockport), inhabited by offbeat characters managing as best they can in difficult circumstances.

Perhaps it helps that we know

Ann comes through it all and there is a happy ending. Because this novel is autobiographical, and the author Carol Morley – the real Ann – is a renowned filmmaker (*The Falling*, *Dreams of a Life*) who has clearly made a success of her life.

No wonder the book rings with truth and resilience. It is about what happens to real people when they are confronted with real tragedy, and that makes for compelling reading.

READ MORE: '7 MILES OUT' BY CAROL MORLEY (BLINK REALITY, £9.85) IS AVAILABLE NOW

25 reasons why we love ADELE

Talented, down to earth, bold and honest... in celebration of Adele's new album release, we share the love

WORDS APRIL CLARE WELSH PHOTOGRAPH JESSE JOHN JENKINS/CAMERA PRESS

Despite being just 27, it feels like Adele has been providing us with the soundtracks to our big loves and heartbreaks for a lifetime. But Adele Laurie Blue Adkins only graduated from the BRIT School of Performing Arts in 2006 – a mere 10 years ago. And it's been quite a decade. From being named as one of *TIME* magazine's most influential people in the world to being awarded an MBE, and a Golden Globe and Oscar (for *Skyfall*), Adele's success has snowballed since her debut album, *19*, was released in 2008. How do you follow that? By creating a second, 30-million selling, multi-award-winning album, *21*, in 2011 of course! Her hotly anticipated third album, *25*, was released in November and, in her recent interviews, we were reminded that it's not only her music we love, but her honesty, vulnerability and groundedness. Here, we share why we love Adele... >>>



1 She doesn't try to hide away.
 'I'm a big personality. I walk into a room, big and tall and loud.' And TV execs have learned not to cut her off while she's accepting her awards because she *will* flip the finger on live TV.

2 But she gets scared on stage just the same...

'I get so nervous on stage I can't help but talk. I try telling my brain to stop sending words to my mouth, but I get nervous and turn into my grandma.'

6

She hasn't forgotten where she's come from.

Seven years after *Hometown Glory* and Adele still celebrates her London roots in the song *River Lea*: 'Tottenham is my mind, body and soul.'

9 She is a passionate supporter of charitable causes.

As well as ardently rallying the cause of World Water Day, for her 2011 tour, Adele demanded that all guests with complimentary tickets donate money to Sands, a UK charity that supports bereaved parents and research into stillbirths.

10

She's supportive of other artists on social media.

Adele never has a bad word to say about her peers on social media, especially Twitter; instead she is full of praise for the likes of Kanye West ('I love him so much') and Frank Ocean among others.

3

She's always a professional – no matter what.

While recording *21*, Adele found out her ex-boyfriend was engaged, but she was back in the studio the day after. 'She was obviously quite fragile and very open about what had happened. But she had fire in her belly,' said producer Paul Epworth.

11

Her debut album, *19*, went seven times platinum.

Released in 2008, *19* was more than a commercial success; it was certified seven times platinum in the UK and shifted an estimated seven million copies worldwide.

4

She is extremely honest, especially after having a few drinks...

'A drunk tongue is an honest one in my opinion. That's definitely my motto, in life,' she said. 'That's why I don't really like drinking no more. The panic you get when you wake up the next morning.'

7

She understands how destructive fame is.

'I'm just frightened of it, you know? I'm frightened of it destroying me. I get frightened for the people I love, feeling like they've lost me.'

8

She's honest about motherhood.

'It's hard. I thought it would be easy, but it's the greatest thing I ever did.'

12

She's a chart topper.

Adele's album, *21*, spent 23 weeks at the top of the UK album charts, topped the charts in over 30 countries and is estimated to have sold over 11 million copies in the US alone.

5

She never wants to lose touch with reality.

'It's not me trying to be like f**king anti-famous; I just want to have a real life so I can write records. No-one wants to listen to a record from someone that's lost touch with reality. So I live a low-key life for my fans. People may think I've changed, but I like to think I haven't.'

13

She's still a gushing fan. When Adele met Stevie Nicks at a Fleetwood Mac concert, she tweeted: 'tonight was THE best night of my life. I love you Stevie Nicks!'

14

She's broken America. *21* spent an incredible 24 weeks at number one on the Billboard 200 Chart, making it the longest running in the top spot since Prince in 1985.

20

She accepts herself.

'I enjoy being me... I've seen people who want to be thinner or have bigger boobs, and it wears them down. I don't want that in my life. It's never been an issue; I've never hung out with people who would make it an issue. I have insecurities, of course, but I don't hang out with anyone who points them out.'

21

She loves her mum.

'She's the calmest person, really strong and clever and beautiful.'

22

Learning to drive meant a lot to her.

One of the highlights of Adele's life to date had nothing to do with money or fame, but was that she passed her driving test!

15

Her latest video for her newest song *Hello* gained the most views ever in 24 hours.

Vevo announced that, with 27.7 million views, the *Hello* video is an official record holder having gained the most views ever in a 24-hour period.

23

She's tried internet dating.

Adele revealed she once signed up to a dating site. 'I was drunk, upset and listening to Sinéad O'Connor's *Nothing Compares 2 U*, she told *Rolling Stone* in 2011. Imagine turning up and realising Adele was your blind date?!

16

Her music moves us.

We've all had a cry to an Adele song and, according to psychologists, *Someone Like You* features *appoggiatura* (grace notes) that create tension and provide emotional relief.

17

She displays her awards next to what she's most proud of.

She's won 86 awards – and she displays them next to her son's drawings.

18

She refuses to be pigeonholed.

'I've never wanted to look like models on the cover of magazines. I represent the majority of women and I'm very proud of that.'

19

She's resilient.

Forced to cancel the majority of her tour in 2011 because of a vocal cord haemorrhage, she underwent surgery, only to make an awe-inspiring comeback at the Grammy Awards in 2012, earning a standing ovation.



24

She loves listening to soppy songs.

Adele may have made the perfect break-up album, but while others cry over her songs, she gets emotional over Labrinth's *Jealous*: 'The minute that piano starts I'm like... snot going everywhere. I can't cope with that song. You could play it at my kid's birthday and I'd burst into tears.'

25

And finally...

She loves her dog as much as we love our *Psychologies* office dog, Oscar. Adele has a Wiener Dachshund called Louis Armstrong and has posed for magazine shoots with him and, in 2011, even declared him 'the love of her life'. Dog lovers unite!



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MIND

Rediscover the art of playing

Every month, **Martha Roberts** invites you to road-test research around feeling good

1 THE PROJECT

Playing about isn't just fun – it has also been shown to boost happiness and mental wellbeing.

2 THE AIM

Do you think that only children and animals benefit from playing? Think again. Whatever your age, larking about makes for happy human beings.

3 THE THEORY

Studies show that as well as being fun, playing with friends, partners, co-workers, children and pets can be good for your health, suggesting we should be doing it more, not less. The benefits for adults include stimulating the mind, boosting creativity and improving relationships. Playing results in laughter, which has immunity-boosting properties*, as well as increasing blood flow in the same way 'as a bout of aerobic exercise'.**

It boosts heart health by helping to open blood vessels, according to a 2011 study†, and also boosts creativity – Northwestern University research found people had better puzzle-solving skills after watching a short comedy clip. Play can also improve performance by helping us think laterally.

But crucially, play makes us happy. In his book *Play* (JP Tarcher, £14.99), expert Dr Stuart Brown says: 'Remembering what play is all about and making it part of our daily lives are probably the most important factors in being a fulfilled human being. The ability to play is critical not only to being happy, but also to sustaining social relationships and being a creative, innovative person.'



NOW TRY IT OUT

● **Play opportunities can be found in situations you may not even have thought of as playing.** For example, joking with strangers in the supermarket queue or playing with a pet both count as playfulness.

● **Reconnect with the childlike 'you'.** Playing with your kids or taking nieces or nephews to the park will help to re-awaken the playful child inside you. Or go to a toy shop and buy magic tricks, crafting supplies or science kits and use them with the kind of joy you'd have felt when you were seven. Invite a friend round to join in and add to the fun.

● **Set aside time.** If you don't feel play can be incorporated into your working day, try to let it into your life elsewhere. Setting specific play time aside is crucial. Even a little play can go a long way to boosting happiness and productivity.

● **Go back to your childhood.** What did you do as a child that excited you? Did you do those activities alone or with others, or both? Is there any way that you can re-create that today?

MARTHA ROBERTS is an award-winning UK health writer and mental-health blogger at mentalhealthwise.com

I'm dreaming of a quiet Xmas

A month of wall-to-wall parties followed by the big family gathering – December can be challenging for introverts. Fear not – Rosie Ifould's survival guide will restore seasonal cheer

This year, I got my first invitation to Christmas drinks on the August bank holiday. By mid-September, all my December weekends were booked up. There's a house party with uni friends, a pub lunch with another group, a carol concert that's usually followed by 'Christmas cocktails', then a party for some of my son's friends at which the parents are expected to stay and mingle. That's before we've even got to work parties and family gatherings.

Can you tell, from my tone, that I'm less than brimming with Christmas spirit at the thought of all this merriment? Don't get me wrong, I genuinely like – and in some cases dearly love – the people behind these invitations. But there's a good reason why I'm not looking forward to seeing them. I am an introvert. I like going out, but I don't like staying out. There's only so much

socialising I can take. I once fell asleep in the toilet of a club in Islington, because I'd been hiding out in there for a little too long. (In my defence it was a really nice, exceptionally clean cubicle.) You will always find me in the kitchen

“It's not just about giving yourself quiet time; it's also about redrawing boundaries”

at house parties, not just because I'm greedy, but because years of experience have taught me that kitchens are where the quieter people hang out and have conversations. There, or on the stairs.

December just isn't kind to introverts. It's the time when social gatherings are at their loudest, drunkest and

most emotionally wrought. Even with family, it can be hard. As Charlotte, a banker, recalls: 'Living in a quiet flat, just my fiancé and me, it was a shock returning to my family home last Christmas. My sister was visiting from New York, which meant lots of visitors. After a few days of entertaining, my energy levels started to crash and burn. I knew I needed to give myself some time alone to recharge when Dad came into the utility room on Christmas Day to find me sitting on the floor. Dad sat down next to me and I realised then who I inherited my introversion from.'

Pick your strategy

Introverts develop all kinds of behaviours under social pressure. 'In my last job, during December, there would be three or four events a week I had to go to,' says Carla, a fundraiser. 'The structured ones were OK, but sometimes you

PHOTOGRAPH: JEKATERINA NIKITINA / GALLERY STOCK

>>>



>>> were just expected to mingle – torture. I worked out that if I grabbed two wine-glasses, and pretended I was making my way across the room to see someone, I could avoid standing around. I basically did laps of parties carrying two glasses, hoping no-one would notice.’

December can also turn introverts into liars. ‘I’ve often lied about my children being ill as an excuse to leave a party early,’ says Hannah, a teacher. ‘It’s now at a stage where I have to keep a list of the imaginary illnesses they’ve had, so I don’t slip up and tell the same person my oldest has chicken pox again.’

‘My family think I really like cooking Christmas dinner,’ says Norah, a care worker. ‘But the real reason I volunteer is it means I can be left on my own, with the radio, while they play noisy games in the other room. It’s my sanctuary.’

It’s hard to admit you don’t feel like going out when the whole world seems to be having fun. Our world is geared towards extroverts, says psychologist Dr Laurie Helgoe, author of *Introvert Power* (Sourcebooks, £9.99), which may be why there’s still so much misunderstanding around being an introvert. It doesn’t necessarily mean someone who’s shy, or hates socialising. ‘What defines introverts is that we’re internally oriented,’ says Helgoe. ‘Too much external stimulation can be overwhelming so we’re more likely to pull back, to allow space.’

The need for space

But how can you get space when you feel under pressure to socialise? In part, it’s about knowing your limits, and accepting that these are different for everyone. Introverts need to pace themselves and be realistic about how many invitations to accept. Life coach and founder of Life Clubs, Nina Grunfeld, suggests building in time for reflection ahead of a busy period. This is not just about giving yourself valuable quiet time; it’s about defining priorities and redrawing boundaries. Most of us

“I like going out but I don’t like staying out. There’s only so much socialising I can take ”

feel we need an excuse to turn down an invitation. ‘What helped me was realising when I said “yes” to everyone else, I was saying “no” to myself,’ says Grunfeld. ‘You have a right to put “time alone” in your diary, if that’s what you need.’

Studies show introverts find it harder to carry out simple cognitive tasks after too much social stimulus. But there are techniques that can reduce the draining effect. Small talk can be particularly tiresome. ‘I find it easier to ask questions than try to talk about myself – I find it less draining to listen,’ says Lisa, an accountant. Having some sort of organising role can also be a good way to avoid small talk. You’ll often spot the introverts handing out drinks, or tidying up in the nice quiet kitchen.

Helgoe, an introvert, is married to an extrovert. In her book, she writes about going to parties but taking two cars, so she doesn’t have to wait for her husband when she’s had her fill of socialising. ‘Instead of slithering away, I can be more explicit about what my

needs are and what I’m doing,’ she says.

It can be especially hard to be explicit about your needs at Christmas when you’re challenging traditions: ‘but we always have the neighbours round on Boxing Day, we’ve done it since 1986!’ ‘Christmas is often a compromise and full of misunderstandings,’ says Grunfeld. ‘It’s worth checking in and asking “is this what we want to do this year?”’

Acknowledge everyone

Grunfeld’s family have started a new tradition recently. ‘Everyone gets an hour that is just theirs. Someone might want to play games, someone else might choose an hour of silence apart from carols on the radio.’ In larger groups, it might be possible to arrange that mornings are for children, and afternoons for grown-ups, or devise a rota so adults each get an hour of quiet time away. The key is acknowledging everyone – not just the most vocal in the group.

Once we feel comfortable saying: ‘I’m an introvert, I need down time,’ then we can start finding ways to get it. We can look out for the physical and emotional signs that tell us when we need to retreat. We can start to spot patterns so we can pre-empt ourselves. And we can start to feel proud of our introvert tendencies. We might even discover we weren’t the only one longing for escape. There are more introverts out there than you think.

SURVIVING THE PARTY SEASON

1 Don’t apologise for needing a break when it all gets too hectic. Your needs are just as valid as the extroverts’.

2 Think about when you feel most stressed and exhausted and work out whether you can build in some alone time, either before or after the most stressful periods.

3 If you’re not sure whether to say yes, ask for more details: ‘How many people do you expect? Who will I know? Is there food/dancing/speeches?’ It helps to know what you’re committing to.

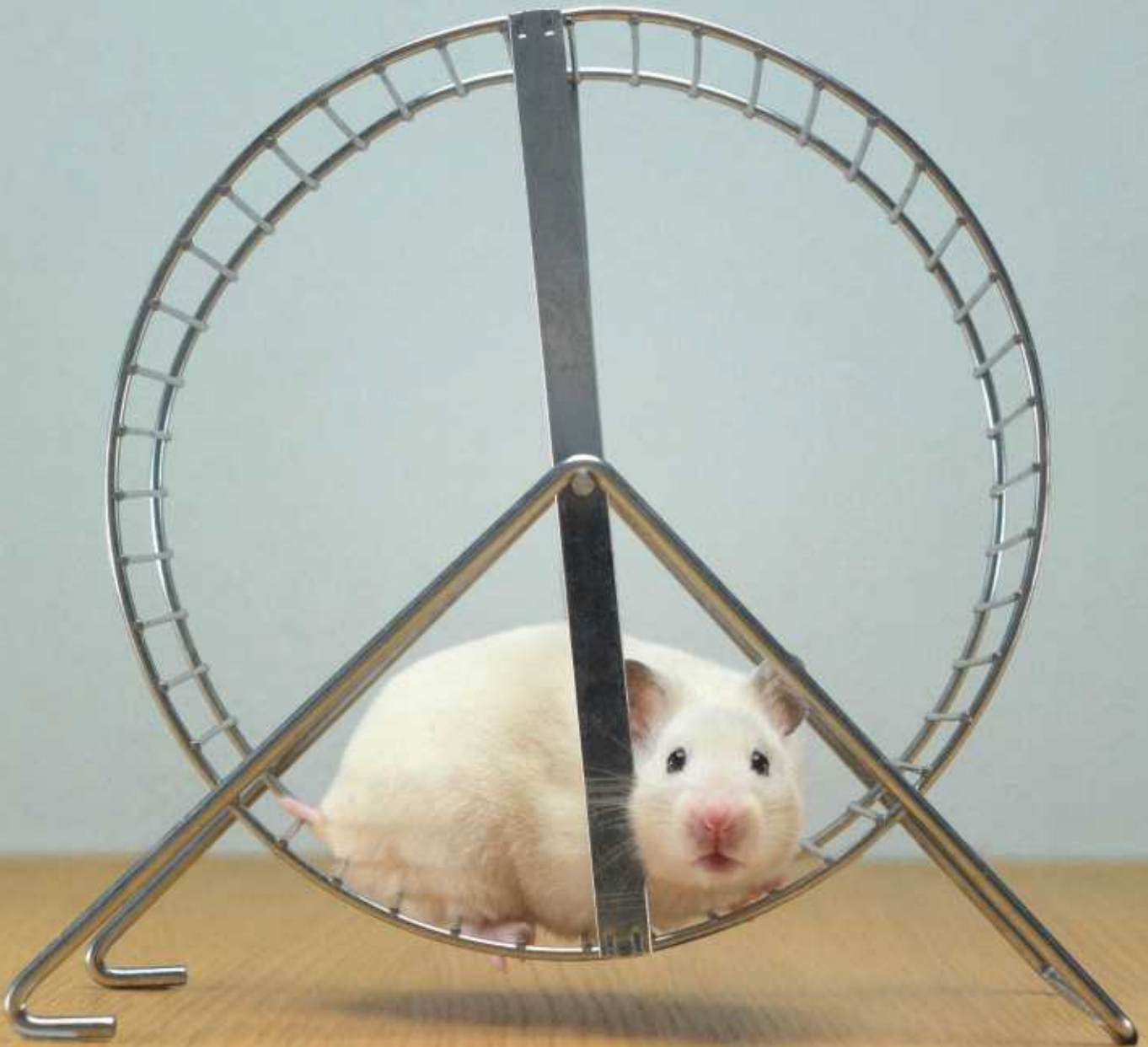
4 Explain your needs to friends and family, so they don’t misread a need for space as a rejection.

A photograph of a person from the waist down, wearing a light green ribbed sweater and a bright red leather skirt. They are holding a red leather bag with a metal clasp. In the background, there is a table covered with a red cloth, set with several bowls of food. A window with a wooden frame is visible behind the table.

HOW EXTROVERTS CAN HELP

- Don't take it personally. If your friend or partner needs some space, try not to make them feel guilty about it. If you really want to see them but they keep pulling away from you, it might be worth changing the setting to somewhere quieter with more time for one-on-one conversation.
- Equally, don't assume they won't want to come to a party (they just might prefer to leave before you).
- Give them some space. 'Introverts don't like being interrupted,' explains Helgoe. Who does? But they may need a little more time to really think about what you've said and how to respond. And, usually, the response will be worth the wait.

Getting
nowhere fast?



Working too hard? You may be; British workers gave £32bn to the economy in unpaid overtime last year. **Oliver Burkeman** looks at changing the way you think so you can change the way you work

As you tap out a reply to yet another work email on your glowing phone, in bed, at 11.30pm, it would be very easy to imagine that being overworked is simply an unavoidable fact of modern life. And we certainly do work hard: British employees contributed a staggering £32 billion to the economy in unpaid overtime in 2014, according to the Trades Union Congress. What's even worse is that the problem is self-perpetuating. Whenever we feel starved of time, researchers have shown, we tend to make foolish, hurried decisions – such as taking on even more projects – so we end up busier still.

But busyness isn't solely a matter of our ever-lengthening to-do lists. It also results from various unhelpful messages we've internalised about the meaning of work. That's excellent news, as it means that by questioning those messages, there's hope of reducing the sense of being overwhelmed. Here are five ways we make overwork worse by the things we tell ourselves – and how to think about work more calmly and realistically instead:

1 “I have to work hard – I’ve just got too much to do!”
The easiest way to explain why you're still sitting at your desk at 8pm, or catching up on emails at home at night, is simply that you have no choice: after all, few of us get to pick and choose which parts of the job we feel like doing. There is certainly some truth in that. But we usually ignore another truth: in the modern workplace, there will *always* be too much to do. Plus, it's a vicious cycle: the quicker you are at replying to emails, the more emails you'll get back. The

“In a quiet moment, ask yourself these two tough questions: do you genuinely love your job – and if you don't, is it truly beyond your control to make a change?”

more you build a reputation in the workplace for handling projects efficiently, then the more projects will land in your lap.

What to do? Instead of telling yourself that with one more heave you'll get everything done (you won't!), focus instead on making sure that the *right* things get priority. For example, your boss's emails might need a quick reply, but maybe others can wait; some meetings are crucial, but perhaps others can be skipped. Ultimately, it's liberating to realise that work will never be 'done': it means you can stop blaming

yourself for not keeping up, as it's impossible to keep up with *everything*.

2 “They can't manage without me. If I don't work this hard, the company will fold”

It's highly tempting to believe that you're utterly indispensable – and if you were to cut back on work, you'd be betraying your colleagues. Partly, that's because we're social creatures, who naturally feel obligations to others. But it's also partly because the alternative – the idea that things would go fine without you – is much scarier to contemplate. Yet the truth, says Laura Vanderkam, author of the time management book *I Know How She Does It* (Portfolio Penguin, £9.99), is that 'if any of us dropped dead tomorrow, Earth would not crash into the sun. It would keep spinning in its orbit as usual. And not only would Earth keep spinning, our organisations would likely keep functioning too.'

That seems harsh, but really, it's a reason to relax. 'Once you get your head around that idea, it's easier to get a bit of perspective,' says Vanderkam. 'You can take a holiday. It's OK.'

3 “The company culture dictates that I work myself to the bone”

Too many workplaces confuse effort with outcomes: managers send the message that what really counts is being at your desk, and being busy, instead of getting the best results. When you stop to think about it, a really good boss shouldn't care how hard you work: if you're doing the job brilliantly, it's nobody else's business >>>

>>> how much elbow-grease it takes. But such enlightened attitudes are rare. The next best alternative is to set simple and consistent boundaries. Be the person who always leaves at 6pm sharp, rather than the person who finds a different reason to grumble about each new project; soon, nobody will notice your leaving time. (It is also better to reliably reply to emails within a day or two, rather than sometimes answering instantly, and other times not at all.) When you set limits on your work hours, something curious happens: with surprising frequency, you'll find work gets done in the time you've allotted for it, leaving you with time to breathe at last.

4 "I'm far less talented than everyone else here, so I have to work harder"

Most of us are familiar with the sense of feeling like a fraud – as if we somehow tricked our way into the job, and any day now, we will be exposed. And even the ultra-talented aren't immune to this: 'I have written 11 books,' the celebrated author Maya Angelou once said, 'but each time, I think, "uh-oh, they're going to find out now. I've run a game on everybody and they're going to find me out".' But this is based on a psychological error. The reason why you think you're alone in your self-doubt is that you only get to hear your own internal monologue – when it comes to judging everyone else's competence, you rely on their words and actions, and never hear their inner panic.

Research suggests that if you *don't* feel like an imposter – at least some of the time – that's probably because you are actually too incompetent to realise you're incompetent. And so, ironically, feeling like a bit of a fraud is probably evidence that you aren't.

“Many workplaces confuse effort with outcomes: sending the message that what really counts is being at your desk, instead of getting the best results”

5 “I enjoy working this hard – really!”
If you love long hours and a 24/7 commitment to the job, don't let anyone else tell you you're wrong: there's no law decreeing that you must live a 'balanced' life of work, children, partners, hobbies and so on. (Think of your heroes – campaigners,

sports people, celebrities – and you'll realise many of them had decidedly 'unbalanced' lives.) That said, it's dangerously easy to convince yourself you love hard work when really it's a kind of avoidance. Perhaps it's too scary to contemplate that what you really want is to cut your hours and your income, in order to see more of your children? Maybe your marriage is strained, and it's easier to hide out at work than confront the problems at home? (Though overwork will make problems worse.)

Busyness, writes essayist Tim Kreider, is often a way of convincing ourselves we're fulfilled when we're not: 'Obviously your life cannot possibly be silly or trivial or meaningless if you are so busy, completely booked, in demand every hour of the day.' In a quiet moment, ask yourself these two tough questions: do you genuinely love your job, and – if you don't – is it really beyond your control to make a change?

HOW TO KNOW WHEN IT'S THEM, NOT YOU

WE BRING BUSYNESS ON OURSELVES IN MANY WAYS. BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOUR EMPLOYER REALLY IS ASKING TOO MUCH?

- When you can't raise the issue. If there's no senior person willing to discuss your workload, it's a sure sign your company culture is toxic.
- When 'just a few weeks' becomes forever. Sure, you may need to put in extra *sometimes*. But you shouldn't be asked to do so indefinitely.
- When work takes a toll on your health. Pushing beyond your physical capacities is no use to anyone – including your company, as the quality of your work will drop.
- When bullying is how you're asked to do more. Extra work is a sacrifice. If your manager uses guilt, insults or shouts, start looking for a new job.
- When it's not 'all hands on deck'. If all the extra work's being piled on you alone, you're being exploited.



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Our agony aunt Mary Fenwick offers a new perspective on whatever is troubling you

“Should I stay or should I go?”



MARY FENWICK is a business coach, journalist, fundraiser, mother, divorcee and widow

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Email mary@psychologies.co.uk, with 'MARY' in the subject line

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Q My husband and I have been together for over 10 years; we have two fantastic kids who are 11 and 14, but the spark has gone in our marriage. Not just gone – extinguished completely. Not only do I not love him, I despise him. Everything he does irritates me. He doesn't help at all around the house, and doesn't make an effort to communicate. I used to make an effort, but now I think, why should I bother? We can spend days just not talking at all.

He has health issues but he makes no effort to find a positive solution. I have tried to be supportive but he's just constantly negative and, after a couple of years of trying everything I can to turn my marriage around, I'm now exhausted. I'm ready to give up. Any last words of advice before I do?
Name supplied

A I won't try to talk you out of leaving, but instead will offer my own experience and observations about what to expect. You might also look at the work of Mavis Hetherington, an outstanding researcher on long-term outcomes for divorce (see 'More Information',

opposite). This is what I learned from my interviews with other people about their divorces. The experience of divorce is worse than most people expect in the short term. The shame and sense of personal failure is persistent, no matter that the public stigma has diminished. It's still a hugely challenging experience to admit your dream of a happy marriage has failed. Awful things will be said and done, you will experience times of choking panic and probably financial anxiety. At the time, I identified with the Virginia Woolf character in *The Hours* who says: 'I am living a life I have no wish to live'.

Perspectives on divorce differ, depending on whether you are the leaver or the left. The public story is usually that the person who leaves is the bad guy, and the one being left a victim. You are the potential leaver; you have been suffering invisibly for some time, but your husband will have a lot of shock and anger before he catches on to what is truly happening.

Does he understand how real and close the danger is? It's common for physical health issues to affect mental health too and he may not be thinking straight. Have you tried getting him into discussion mediated by a third

party at all – a counsellor, or even a member of his family whom you trust?

The key is how good you can make your divorce. My standard advice is to be as generous as you possibly can, especially in fostering your children's relationship with their dad. We want children to learn to take responsibility for their actions, and the consequences, even when that is tough. So, even when you are hurting, you still have a responsibility to make this as good as possible for your children. Do bear in mind that no-one actually knows how divorce affects children, because there are issues with running controlled experiments. You'd have to assess the outcomes for children who have stayed stuck within an unhappy marriage.

My own summary would be: divorce will bring you some bad times, but a bad marriage is definitely worse. Wishing you love, strength and generosity.

“I need to set up healthy boundaries with my parents”

Q After a series of traumatic relationships in my twenties, I’ve evolved into a happy, successful, confident and independent individual – but my parents still treat me the same way they did when I was a child. For example, I had an argument with my mother last year when I found out she’d been opening my mail for the last 28 years and reading it all.

They’ve always suffered from lack of empathy. I rely on a large group of supportive friends, as I know I won’t get much from my family. There was a time when I would choose to ignore their actions and comments, but now I feel I need to do something about it. I’m trying to set up some healthy

boundaries between us to stop the situation getting out of hand but it’s difficult as every time I try, my parents get negative and withdraw. I get the impression they’re not fully aware of their behaviour. How I can move forward and resolve this before it gets worse? **Name supplied**

A If we imagine a perfect parental relationship scale of zero to 10, it sounds as if you are around a two or three. This is tough for you, but somehow you’ve developed amazing qualities of resilience, determination and self-care – in spite of, or in response to, that background.

If your parents still receive any of your official mail, please cut that cord:

arrange a rolling redirection notice at the post office. With that out of the way, I suggest you write to your parents along similar lines to how you have written to me. If you can find it in your heart to start by thanking them for whatever good they have contributed to your life, that will probably enable them to ‘hear’ your words more easily. If you can set out the boundaries you want, and stick to them, despite negativity or withdrawal, you’ll know you’ve done your best to nudge the scale towards a four. I will hold in my heart the hope that your parents do their bit and you can achieve a liveable five. Thank you for sharing this challenge, which is probably more common than we care to imagine.

“I failed my degree. How can I get back on track?”

Q I’ve recently turned 23 and have just failed university. I am back living with my parents and working as a sales assistant. When I look at all my friends who have recently graduated and are now working in pretty great jobs, I can’t help but feel like a failure. I’ve spent three years of my life working towards a degree, but I have nothing to show for it. Please help me – what can I do to make me feel like my life is back on track and is actually going somewhere?

Name supplied

A Welcome to my world! By many standards I am a failure – in Jane Austen’s time I’d have failed due to my lack of

accomplishment in painting, music and needlework. In a 21st-century life where I am warm and well-fed, I have not cracked the challenge of keeping pairs of socks together in the wash, and had a car engine blow up on me due to lack of oil – more than once!

We live in a culture where ‘what do you do?’ is an acceptable question, but it is incredibly, ridiculously limited. All of us are much, much more than a job title or a set of academic achievements.

You have great foundations with your health, parents and friends who love and support you, and proof of employability. A useful question to ask people who love their jobs, is ‘how did you get to where you are?’ This should open up lots of infectious enthusiastic conversations, and ways

of seeing new pathways. University did not ignite your spark, but that could be interpreted as a failure of the university, not you. I recommend watching Steve Jobs’ address to students at Stanford University about not being in too much of a hurry to join the dots (see below).

Meanwhile congratulations on being off-track. It’s where all the interesting people hang out.

MORE INFORMATION

Read *For Better or For Worse: Divorce Reconsidered* by E. Mavis Hetherington and John Kelly (WW Norton, £11.99)

Watch Steve Jobs’ Stanford Commencement Speech 2005 at <https://youtu.be/D1R-jKKp3NA>



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Your wake-up call for 2016

Chris Baréz-Brown, our new columnist, invites you to join us for a year of adventure, where we stop operating on autopilot and start living a life full of joy and curiosity

Many of us feel dissatisfied with our lives, spending our days in a sort of 'waking sleep', where we are on autopilot. This year, I'm delighted to join *Psychologies*, to create a 12-month long experiment to break our routines.

We will introduce the experiments one by one from Monday to Thursday each week starting on 24 December 2015. For example, our first month's experiments look like this:

- **WEEK ONE** I will tell one person per day what I love about them.
- **WEEK TWO** I will spend the first 10 minutes of every day outside.
- **WEEK THREE** I will only eat food I have prepared from scratch.
- **WEEK FOUR** I will turn off all my usual digital notifications.

At the end of the month, we will review your results and those from our team of *Psychologies* Wake Up! Champions (see box, right).

BE A WAKE-UP! CHAMPION

Apply to be one of our weekly bloggers on Life Labs and receive signed copies of Chris's books. Plus, you will be given your own weekly *Psychologies* blog to write about your journey throughout 2016. Email thegreatwakeup@barez-brown.com and tell us why you want to 'wake up' in 2016.

Come and meet Chris at our event on 6 January; for details, see page 61.



PHOTOGRAPH: GABRIELA HERMAN/GALLERY STOCK

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Sibling fallout

A hostile relationship with an adult sibling is a heartbreaking reality for many people. After 20 years of frostiness, **Sophia Smith** went in search of a solution

Her voice sounded so full of vitriol that I could barely make out what she was saying. ‘Hate’, ‘disgusting’ and ‘never want to see you again’ featured highly, though, as did other choice descriptors for me. When I put down the phone, I was trembling. The shock of being told – no, screamed at – that someone despises you so much that they want to cut you out of their life for good is upsetting enough. The fact that the someone in question is your sister is even harder to bear.

I remained in shock for a few days, playing the phonecall over and over in my head. Waves of anxiety and anger tore through my body as I recalled the sibling venom. I meditated. I cried. Then I got rational.

My sister’s attitude to family has been pretty negative for the last 20 years, even more so since meeting her husband a few years ago. From our teenage years, she started

distancing herself, keen to bow out of landmark occasions and holidays, with my other sister and I picking up the pieces of her often-hurtful behaviour. Our interaction since then has been transactional and

“Even if you cut someone out of your life, they live on in your head, cropping up in your dreams and worries”

perfunctory. We don’t even bother to send each other birthday or Christmas cards any more.

As I emerged from the tailspin, I came around to thinking that *actually*, this sibling severing would not be such a great loss to my life. The

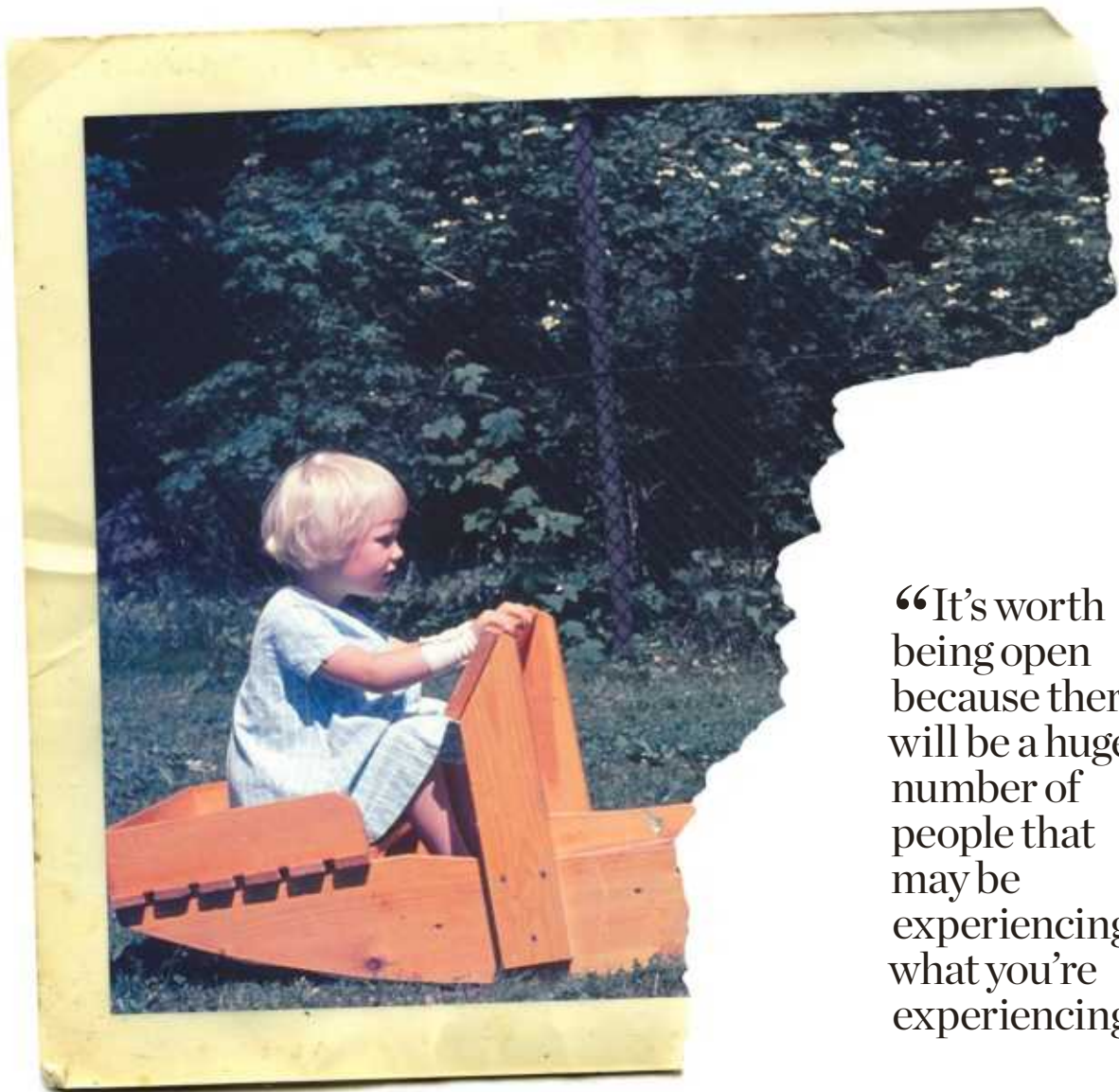
relationship was causing me nothing but stress, irritation and upset so mixed in with the sadness at the fact I’d failed in the big sister stakes was relief. Huge relief. At least we didn’t have to keep up the exhausting sham of forced happy families.

So instead of attempting any kind of reconciliation, I embraced my sister’s proposal of estrangement. It was surprisingly liberating. Perhaps that’s why estrangement is on the rise, say experts in the field, with one in five families in the UK touched by it, according to charity Stand Alone. Many more, if you include people who are in superficial contact, but ‘emotionally estranged’.

Sibling relationships are highly susceptible to this ‘cold war’ type of disconnection, says Stand Alone clinical chair Dr Jason Robinson, where there is ‘increasing frostiness’ between two people. He believes that sibling abuse – physical and emotional – is rife and ‘massively under >>>

PHOTOGRAPHS: GETTY IMAGES, CORBIS, ISTOCK





“It’s worth being open because there will be a huge number of people that may be experiencing what you’re experiencing ”

>>> reported’ but, as a society, we shrug it off by saying ‘oh, that’s just siblings’.

Rewriting the script

I’m still confused about the events leading up to the relationship breakdown. The trigger – seemingly a few careless comments I’d made that she took exception to – didn’t seem proportionate to her extreme reaction. However, shortly after this when her vitriol transferred squarely to my parents, it became obvious the issue ran much deeper; her grievances with us were locked in the past.

Pages and pages of emails and

texts, from my sister to my parents, rewrote the script of our childhood, recasting her as the Cinderella-esque character, sandwiched between two evil sisters and neglected by uncaring parents. It wasn’t a fairytale that I, or the rest of the family, recognised. Frustrated and seething, she then ceased all contact with my parents and sister, too.

This scenario is very common, says Robinson, when communication has become superficial, strained or non-existent. ‘We [all parties, not just the estranged] reconstruct a narrative from miscommunication

to defend ourselves and reassure ourselves. But we build these stories in the absence of real feedback.’

It’s now been over a year since that phonecall. I’ve not had any further contact with my sister and it’s been a tough 12 months. Not because I’ve missed her, but because I’ve had to watch my parents wither and fall apart, heartbroken. They’ve been living through my worst nightmare: being told by your child that you have failed them as a parent. Witnessing their pain only served to validate my belief that this toxic influence doesn’t deserve to be part of our

family. Throughout the year, I was uncannily at peace with my decision to give up on the relationship.

However, that started to change when our estrangement reached its first-year anniversary. As I realise how effortlessly one year could slip into two, 10, 50... I'm nagged by the thought: do I really want to sleepwalk into that? It's as if I'm edging towards the point of no return with a devil on one shoulder (*'Go! She's a bitch! You don't want her contaminating your life!'*) and an angel on the other (*'What about empathy? Compassion? Where's yours now?'*).

I've decided to try and drown out the devil and listen to the angel. Because no matter how liberating, I can't escape the reality that cutting a blood tie, particularly in such a blasé way, just doesn't feel right. Like it or not (and I don't particularly like it) she is a link with where I come from and who I am. There's also the guilt that perhaps, 'estrangement is one of the tools we have in our toolbox as a family member, but it's played too often and too quickly,' says relationship psychologist, author and co-chair of the Council on Contemporary Families,

Dr Joshua Coleman. But where do I go from here?

According to experts, the first step in healing a rift is to honestly consider your role in causing and maintaining it. The next step is to try and see the situation from the other person's perspective. Dr Coleman, for instance, recommends 'empathy, empathy, empathy' because 'you're not going to get anyone's attention if you're only criticising or blaming them; people don't come back into families because you've shamed them to, usually it's because they feel more understood. If you have it in >>>



HOW TO BUILD BRIDGES WITH A SIBLING

Dr Jason Robinson, clinical chair at charity Stand Alone, who runs workshops on reconciliation, gives us some pointers:

- Look at your own role in the rift as honestly as you can. Then try and get an understanding of your sibling's perspective.
- Remember that just because you're siblings, it doesn't mean you have to agree on everything. Also, remember neither of you has to be the 'perfect' brother or sister. You just need to be good enough.
- Avoid meeting at emotionally loaded times when there is pressure to be the perfect family, such as Christmas. Instead, do something low-key and informal, like go for coffee together, alone, in a quiet place.
- Normalise your situation; remember many siblings do not get on, so don't stigmatise yourself by self-judging negatively in your internal dialogue.
- Weigh up how the reconciliation is going based only on direct communication with your sibling, rather than second-hand reports. Families can be very political and different members can have different agendas.

>>> you, reach out to them and take responsibility, even if you don't agree with the intensity of their feelings.'

Struggling to take responsibility or empathise, I decided to explore the conflict using an approach called Constellations, where participants assume the roles of the family members, which I'd heard can help you see a wider perspective. Its premise is that deep emotions usually arise because something is out of kilter in the wider family dynamic. The process tries to reach a resolution and, in facilitator and philosopher Robert Rowland Smith's experience, 'as a general rule, it's better to include the excluded; the cost of excluding them is heavy for everybody in the family.'

Fascinating insights

It was a gruelling, fascinating, uplifting, surreal hour. It reminded me that, not long ago, I was fighting the same demons from childhood that my sister is grappling with now – low self-esteem, comparison and catastrophism. Hours of therapy had helped me overcome them and see that, while our parents always wanted the best for us, inadvertently their strong influence left me feeling like I wasn't good enough if I wasn't achieving. Whereas I got depressed and blamed myself, my sister reacted by becoming aggressive, and blaming everyone around her. But I no longer feel angry with her – just sad. I know how painful that headspace is.

Rowland Smith noted how much judgement there was loaded in the way I spoke, particularly about what a family 'should' be like. He made me realise that, while I may have worked hard to ease my self-judgment, I haven't done this in relation to my sister. Take what I said earlier about her not deserving to be part of our family. What gives *me* the right to

decide that? She *is* part of my family and her relationships with other family members are just as valid as mine. Any fracture damages the whole. Being open about my sibling situation has prompted many friends to share similar woes of unsisterly (or unbrotherly) relationships, revealing a dark, stigmatised underbelly of family life. It's comforting to know

“My sister's relationships with other family members are just as valid as mine. Any fracture damages the whole”

I'm not alone. They may not have severed the link as dramatically as my sister and I, but they're very often emotionally distanced; the socially acceptable face of estrangement.

Ultimately, however, as Rowland Smith says, any kind of estrangement is 'a futile gesture' because even if you cut someone out of your life, mentally they live on in your head, cropping up in your dreams, worries and preoccupations. He offers me comfort, though, with his philosophy that conflicts like mine can ultimately strengthen the family unit if worked through. 'If we have a completely successful, unblemished personal life we are slightly weightless, less real. We've got to learn to embrace the negative; it's a stage in building ourselves,' Rowland Smith points out.

'Perfect family' pressure

We've also got to relieve the pressure to have 'perfect families' and accept the reality of messy human relationships. As Becca Bland, journalist and founder of Stand Alone

says: 'It's worth being open because there will be a huge number of people who may be experiencing what you're experiencing.'

I like Rowland Smith's idea that this *annus horribilis* could be a catalyst for rebuilding my sibling relationship on more solid foundations. If I could go back to my childhood and treat my sister better, I would. Like many siblings, we spoke to each other in a way that I would never speak to a friend and made no attempt to hide the fact we didn't get on, or try to see the good in one another. She's also one of the few people I've ever wanted (and tried) to physically hurt in my life.

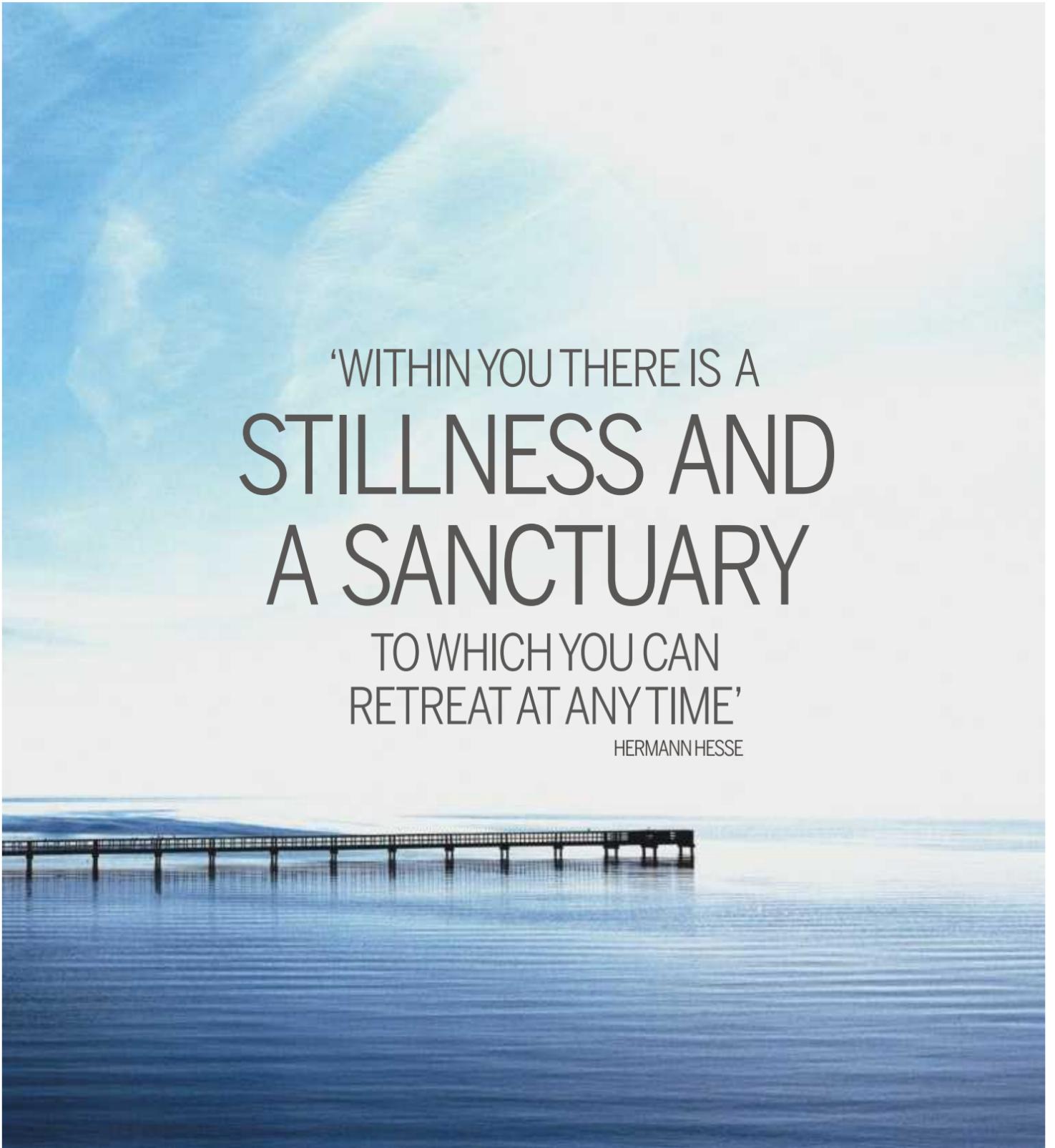
But alas, as a 40-something grown-up who can't go back in time, I can only deal with the present. I have often wondered what I would do if I saw her in the street. A year ago, I would definitely have walked the other way. Now, I think, I wouldn't. I'd move towards her, a small step perhaps, and see what happened. That, at least, is progress.

MORE INSPIRATION:

● **Read:** To find out more about Constellations with Robert Rowland Smith, see newconstellations.com.

● **Take part:** Dr Jason Robinson runs regular workshops to help those experiencing estrangement, family rifts and trying to reconcile, go to standalone.org.uk.

● **Log on:** Dr Joshua Coleman hosts a webinar programme on estrangement, visit drjoshuacoleman.com. (My mother is currently doing this and says it is helping her enormously.)



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Into the light

Rachel Kelly kept a diary of her journey to live a more balanced life. Here, she shares eight small steps that made a big impact on her happiness

ILLUSTRATIONS NAOMI ELLIOTT

Eighteen years ago, the idea that I might ever emerge from the darkness of deep clinical depression and be well again seemed unthinkable. Yet now, many winters have passed and I have returned to the light. Mostly I am calm and well, and some days I even feel as if I'm walking on sunshine.

My depression was born of anxiety

and feeling overwhelmed. At that low point almost two decades ago, it was so severe and the physical agony of the illness so painful, all I wanted to do was to die. I would lie in bed, clinging to my mother's arm so tightly that it was red from my clutch. She was often all that lay between me and the real possibility of suicide: my husband was out at work and she had come to live with us.

Now that I am feeling better, I am learning how to do less, to be more grateful and to enjoy the moment.

So blessed do I feel to have made this recovery that over the past year, I have been emboldened to keep a diary of my progress.

Here are eight of my small steps – two for each season – which have helped me become happier.



“It’s easy to be grateful for nice things but, over time, the trick I’m learning is how to be grateful for the less obviously positive events in the day”

WINTER

Remember you’re a human being

In the run-up to Christmas, I repeat this simple mantra: ‘Remember – you’re a human *being* not a human *doing*.’ It’s a good way of reminding myself to slow down and take time to ‘be’ rather than to become a walking ‘to-do’ list. I feel much more at peace when I defend space in my schedule for doing nothing at all. I’ve learnt that the best way to achieve this is to blank out space in the diary with my secret code: ‘BT’ for ‘Being Time’. This makes it easier to say no. I simply say: ‘I’ve already got something important in the diary then.’ And I have: an hour with no urgent task to do or occasion to attend and a chance to renew, recharge and reflect deeply.

The HALT technique

The festive season also finds me using the ‘HALT’ technique – pausing in stressful moments to check in with myself, and gauge whether I’m Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired. If I am, then I give myself the chance to find a solution that isn’t an ill-judged knee-jerk response: eating a sandwich, say, rather than snapping at an unwitting victim. The French have a lovely expression that encapsulates the importance of calling on patience and restraint when we feel out of kilter, rather than bulldozing on: *reculer pour mieux sauter* – take a step back in order to leap higher. >>>

>>> **SPRING****Stuffocation**

I find the sunshine a welcome change, but with it comes a familiar itch: the need to spring clean. April finds me noticing the dusty piles that seem to have accumulated in every corner. I know clearing cupboards clears my mind; feeling overwhelmed can quickly lead to feeling anxious.

But here's the problem: I'm one of those people who finds it hard to throw things out – it runs in the family. My granny kept a mouse in the freezer in case she ever got a cat. The following working rule has helped. I save only what gives me joy or has some indelible link to family and friends. If in doubt, I imagine how mortified I would be if others found out that something they'd given me had been chucked out. Anything else can be thanked and sent on its way.

Gratitude

The 'Three Good Things' practice has proved handy and comes especially naturally as spring bulbs poke their heads up and the evenings grow longer. As I settle for bed, I think of three positive things that happened during the day, and add them to my 'gratitude' notebook. It's easy to be grateful for nice things but, over time, the trick I'm learning is how to be grateful for the less obviously positive events in the day. This teaches us to tap into the mindset that everything is happening *for* us rather than *to* us. We can begin to recognise opportunities and lessons in place of disappointment and dejection.

SUMMER**Flower power**

I'm lucky to have a small back garden which is a constant stress-reliever throughout the year, but never more so than in the dusty days of summer when I retreat from the city to my tiny patch of green. As I deadhead overblown roses and sweep faded leaves and detritus into tidy mounds, I have a sense of regaining control and peace. But there are days when I haven't time to be in my garden, and the following tip has provided a useful substitute. Find a fragrant flower as you are walking along. Hold it under your nose, close your eyes, take deep breaths and inhale deeply. Whenever I do this, I always walk on with a spring in my step.

Mending

When a treasured piece of pottery gets broken in Japan, the cracks are mended with special glue that has been mixed together with powdered gold. The cracks are deliberately made a feature of thanks to this art, which is known as *kintsugi* or 'golden joinery.' The piece thereby becomes unique, and arguably more beautiful.

I feel as if I too have undergone this repair process. Like a broken Japanese pot or vase, I have experienced plenty of breaks, but time and patience have put me back together again with new and interesting features. It's an idea that makes me feel wonderfully calm.

“Depending on one another can bring us closer together and also reminds us of our common humanity”

**AUTUMN****Cherish your mid-point**

Back to my desk after the summer holidays, and I've had some good news about a work project. I'm learning, however, not to let achievements determine my sense of self-worth. Instead, I find I'm calmer if I stay balanced and remain at 'mid-point.'

This means not overly buying into the 'I'm so special' belief system when things go well. If you do, then when your luck changes, you're likely to believe the opposite: 'I'm so worthless', when in fact, neither is true. Your mid-point is a steadying mindset of valuing yourself and your endeavours unconditionally and in a way that's neither inflated by external successes nor punctured by defeats.

Formation flying

As the November nights draw in, you might see a flock of geese in the sky heading to warmer climes. The V-formation the geese fly in helps to reduce the workload of each individual goose. If a goose becomes sick or injured and is forced to land, two other members of the flock accompany it and remain with it until it is well enough to fly again.

The mantra of my generation was that we should be independent. Yet, the sight of these birds always reminds me that depending on one another can bring us closer together and reminds us of our common humanity. I've had to learn to accept help. If we were to lean on each other a little more, how much further could we fly?

'Walking on Sunshine: 52 Small Steps to Happiness' by Rachel Kelly (Short Books, £9.99) is out now. For more information, follow Rachel on Twitter @RachelKellyNet or visit rachel-kelly.net

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Lissen Marschall with her dog, Luna. 'She's a huge dog and needs a lot of exercise so would usually get very wet and dirty – it was this that inspired my new business,' says Marschall

'The best thing about settling down is now we can have a dog'



'When I started to make jewellery, it would take me around 10 hours to create one necklace. I still love making them'

“You can make a home anywhere”

For Danish entrepreneur Lissen Marschall, home is not bricks and mortar, but creating *hygge*, the Danish word for ‘cosiness’, wherever she is in the world

WORDS ALICE KATO PHOTOGRAPHS SARAH COGHILL

LISSEN MARSCHALL STRIDES into her kitchen with her huge dog, Luna, at her heels and envelops me in a hug. ‘Welcome to Denmark!’ she beams, as she settles me down in front of a wood-burning stove with a cup of Japanese tea and lights some candles. ‘Yes, I love being back in my native Denmark, but for me, home is not a geographical place, but the spark of possibility and creativity you carry with you wherever you go. Over the years, I’ve learned to create a home anywhere.’

For the past 16 years, Marschall has travelled all over the world. ‘I’ve lived in ashrams in India, beach shacks in Japan

and grand apartments in Paris – starting businesses along the way,’ she laughs.

After leaving school, Marschall began her career as a singer, and travelled all over the world. ‘I did different things, from sing the part of Éponine in *Les Misérables* in Copenhagen to creating my own jazz band in London,’ she says. It was here she met her English husband, a travel writer, and had their two children, Asger and Emil, now 14 and 12. ‘We lived in a tiny flat in London with two kids under three, but home to me has never been about bricks and mortar but creating a cosy space with the people we love. In Denmark, we have a word for

it: *hygge*. It means creating a warm atmosphere and enjoying the good things in life with good people. To me, a home is about lighting candles, a fire and sitting around the table discussing the meaning of life. I am sure that’s why we Danes are known as the happiest people in the world!’

After London, the family moved to Paris for a couple of years. ‘I loved singing but when the kids came along, the hours were too antisocial. I couldn’t be out playing gigs at night, so I started to experiment with my other passion, making jewellery. I had always been fascinated by India and Japan, so before >>>



'This kimono is from Kyoto and I love it because I know some of its history – a bride-to-be wore it'

'It's amazing to have such a massive office – it inspires me to have big ideas!'



WetDog is an absorbent coat for dogs, which minimises the smell and mess of wet dogs, invented by Marschall

'I love playing the piano after work and on weekends'



Commuting to the office...



'I've always been fascinated by Japan and its history. I bought these pictures at a Japanese auction house for my husband as a special souvenir from Osaka'



>>> the children started school, I decided to travel with them and my husband, and buy vintage saris and kimonos for my jewellery-making.' She started her first business called Bohemian Strings, selling necklaces interwoven with vintage fabric. 'I created a website and started to supply many shops globally. It was a great business to have while bringing up children as I could work while they napped,' she says.

Once the children started school, Marschall and her family moved back to Denmark. 'My husband learned to speak Danish and we settled here. We rented an airy Scandi-chic house with white walls and a roaring fire – and a huge office next door. Bliss! And finally we could get a dog, our labradoodle

called Luna. A house becomes a home when you have a dog!' Hearing her name, Luna leaps up from beside the fire and settles at Marschall's feet. 'It was dealing with the mud from a wet dog that inspired me to invent a product that would stop the mess getting all over my beautiful white house,' she says.

Siccaro, Marschall's new business was born in 2013 and WetDog, her new super-absorbent bathrobe for dogs, was launched as her first product. 'I started experimenting with different absorbent fabrics that would block out the smell, absorb the liquid and be antibacterial.' She ended up producing her own material and mixing it with antibacterial bamboo fabric. 'I love having a dog but wanted to minimise the mess,' she

explains. 'It took a year of experimenting but we finally launched something that is proving popular with dog-owners.'

Marschall has inherited her entrepreneurial spirit from her father Peter, an inventor. (He invented the iconic 'Buster' lampshade collar for sick animals in the 1970s.) 'This business feels like coming home in a way,' she explains. 'It's the culmination of my life's work so far. I feel blessed that I can come back to my home country after travelling all over the world – and even more blessed to have a 30-second commute to work.'

The WetDog range by Siccaro is out now. For UK stockists, see siccaro.com; 01207 291247.

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dreamchallenges



WORK

How to give and receive feedback

Every month, **Oliver Burkeman** invites you to improve your work life

1 THE PROJECT

Feedback could be the most agonising aspect of the modern workplace. Let's face it: there's probably no way to make it *fun* to be told that you're underperforming. Or, for that matter, to say that to someone else, if it's your job to deliver the feedback. But there are a few tricks to make it less painful.

2 THE AIM

Feedback is a minefield because our brains aren't made to take criticism well – and the so-called 'negativity bias' ensures we'll dwell on any fault-finding long after compliments have faded from memory. We also engage in what feedback experts Sheila Heen and Douglas Stone call 'wrong-spotting' – zeroing in on the one part of the feedback we consider factually wrong, then fixating on it. It's a toxic mess, which means feedback rarely gets to perform its originally intended function: helping us to improve.

3 THE THEORY

The crucial thing to grasp, say Heen and Stone, is that there are three kinds of feedback: praise for accomplishments, advice on how to improve, then, finally, rating performance. If you're delivering feedback, it's vital to keep these separate. (Abandon the famous 'sandwich technique' of praise, then criticism, then praise.) Meanwhile, if you're receiving feedback, set aside 'wrong-spotting' in favour of 'difference-spotting'. Ask yourself: if your boss claims you're not performing well, what explains the difference of opinion? It *may* be that your boss is a bully, and you need to find a new job. But it's just as likely to be a breakdown in communication. Or – however much it stings to admit it – the truth.



NOW TRY IT OUT

- **Actively ask for feedback.** It's a strange truth that criticism is much easier to take if you requested it. Before your boss delivers a negative judgment, ask her to identify your biggest weakness.
- **Switch perspectives.** If negative feedback lands in your lap, try to imagine you discovered it yourself, says mental health expert Alex Lickerman. You'll shift your focus from the perceived insult ('How dare he call me disorganised!') to the underlying question ('Am I disorganised?').
- **Focus on the behaviour, not the person.** Remember you're not judging someone's character – just their performance in a specific area. For example, you can criticise an employee's inefficiency at handling email without implying he or she is an inefficient person at the core.

OLIVER BURKEMAN is the author of 'The Antidote: Happiness For People Who Can't Stand Positive Thinking' (Canongate, £8.99)

JOIN US! SIGN UP FOR OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER AT [PSYCHOLOGIES.CO.UK](https://psychologies.co.uk) FOR NEW WAYS TO LOVE YOUR LIFE

Geri Horner

Singer, songwriter and ex-Spice Girl Geri Halliwell-now-Horner talks about connection, kindness, authenticity and the drivers behind her ambition

INTERVIEW **ALI ROFF** PHOTOGRAPH **PÅL HANSEN**

For me, life is about kindness, authenticity, courage and joy, not in a frivolous way but real joy and fun!

I think the most important thing is that we all feel heard. If we live under one umbrella of kindness, starting with being kind to yourself, then to others, that allows you to be exactly who you are, without treading on anyone else's voice or hurting anybody else.

I didn't come from a privileged background. My mother and father worked hard, my dad admired Margaret Thatcher; a greengrocer's daughter, and that said to me 'greengrocer's daughter becomes prime minister' – anything is possible. I was lucky enough to be one of two students chosen to take a test to attend a good local grammar school. That was a defining moment for my education. I was hungry to learn, but I was also a little cheeky; I lacked discipline.

My dad was a bit of a procrastinator; he didn't try to succeed in achieving the dreams he had. He always wanted to write a book but didn't because he was scared – like many of us. I always thought it was so sad. It inspired me to go for my goals; I knew I wanted something different.

People have been surprised at my change of name, particularly because I have a history with my name. I'm proud of that, but equally, as my parents were divorced, it left me quite guarded about sharing and intimacy. I always took a step back from being in union with anyone. Until I embarked on intimacy wholeheartedly, I didn't realise what the benefit was, and I can now say I feel like it's a positive thing. It's a bit like having a baby – until I had my baby, I didn't really know how much joy and love I'd have in my heart. Changing my name is not a losing of self; it's a joining together.

When I was part of the Spice Girls, I was saying what others didn't have the voice to say themselves – I had a

platform to say it, but all I was doing was reflecting back the zeitgeist. You're feeling this? I'm feeling this! And that voice evolves. 'We want to save the world! We can do it – you can do it!' But back then, it was youthful bravado. Now I'm grown up, my voice is more grounded. The message doesn't have to be rammed down anybody's throat. It takes more confidence to be quiet and let that message come through naturally. It's great to voice your opinion, but you don't need a megaphone for it either.

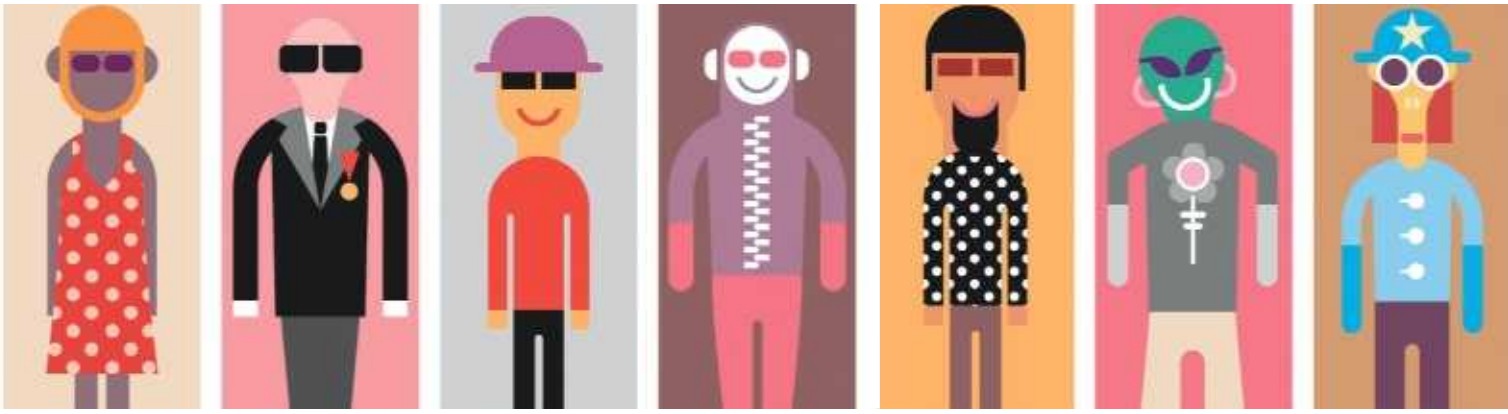
A lot of my thirties were spent experimenting, discovering and integrating back into real life [after the Spice Girls]. I wanted to find an authentic path, but I was in that uncomfortable transitioning period. There was a time where I thought I might give up my career because I was looking outwards, looking for someone else who had walked that path before me. But I couldn't see anyone I could connect with and think 'I want to do it like that'.

I'm scared all the time. And that's where courage, support and real confidence comes in, not bravado confidence – it has to come from a grounded, burrowed place.

I'm done with the airbrush, and the masks we put on; for example, a selfie that just feels empty. It's like sugar; it gives you a high, but actually there's no substance to it. The best songs are honest; they aren't decorated with empty sugar. So, when I'm performing, I think; I'm just communicating. But I put my hands up too – I'm vain. I want to look good. We can't help it as human beings.

I don't have the answers; I'm still looking. But I do have faith in God – something bigger than myself. It's a wonderful thing to have, faith. And I think that human beings crave connection and meaning. We're all children of something greater, and when I have that faith, I have a much more expanded heart, and compassion and tolerance for all of us.
Geri Horner is set to release her new album in the spring





Have you had a happy year?

A year ago, *Psychologies* and Action for Happiness launched a joint Happiness Club project together. As we celebrate our first year, inaugural club founder Suzy Greaves asks, has it worked? Are Happiness Club members happier?

Last December, I started our very first Happiness Club. We joined forces for a year-long project with charity Action for Happiness to invite our readers to create book-club style gatherings in our own homes where we invited friends along to discuss how we can put happiness – ours and other people's – at the heart of our life philosophy. The vision was for *Psychologies* and Action for Happiness to work together to create a happier and less self-centred world, with far fewer people suffering from mental health problems and far more people feeling good, functioning well and trying to help others.

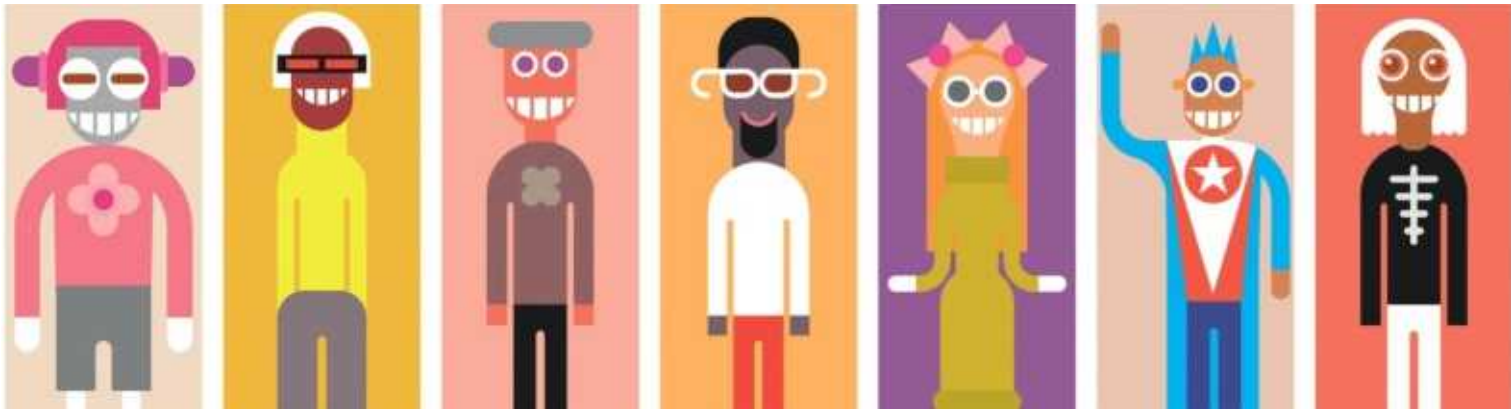
Has it worked? Well, the big picture is that we've had over 1,000 clubs starting globally with an estimated 10,000 people focusing on happiness every month. For me, personally, it's been a profound year. I've become part of a group of incredibly kind and supportive women. Slowly, over time, we've come to know each other and started to trust each other, not only with the highs of our lives, but also the lows. It hasn't been all laughs in 2015, with ill health, heartbreak and stress snapping at our heels. But what has been magical is that we've created a safe place where we can be honest and know we

won't be judged, but rather listened to and supported. In our last Happiness Club of this year, I found myself incredibly moved as we quietly chatted together, and I realised we'd found somewhere for two hours on a Monday night once a month to just be with the good, the bad and the ugly in our lives. Happiness is not just about joy, but about acceptance, support and love.

Seeking out happiness

It's also about shifting our attention and choosing to seek out the light when all around feels dark; to seek inspiration when all you feel is despair, and to know there is a road back from misery to happiness. I suppose I've always been passionate about this because deciding to make that shift started for me at an early age, when I lost both my parents to cancer as a teenager. Quickly, I had to learn to shift my attention – to actively seek happiness rather than be defined by grief. I learnt we cannot control what happens on the outside, but we *can* control how we react to it, and that distinction makes all the difference between a happy life and a miserable one.

I only wish I'd had access to Action for Happiness 30 years



ago, because the charity has done the hard work of giving us the scientifically proven methods and practices to shift our attention to being happy and create a happier world wrapped up in its deceptively simple '10 keys to happiness' (see right).

Take action

This year, I've been reminded that it's not enough to just read about happiness to make a difference to the quality of your life; you have to *do* something differently, too. That's why I believe Happiness Clubs are working. Every month, you invite a bunch of friends to come together to focus their attention on happiness, to have fun, to eat, maybe have a glass of wine and to discuss questions like: what do you enjoy about giving? How can you connect more with your local community? How can you be unconditionally supportive to yourself? Then you are challenged to take one small action to improve your own and other people's happiness, and held to account by the group to take that action. The Happiness Club provides the architecture of monthly gatherings where together, you get to create the foundation of happiness habits to build on.

As editor of *Psychologies*, I've come to understand that to make a real difference and create a genuine impact in people's lives, we need to take it off the page of a magazine and create structures in our lives that support a new way of doing things. And together with Action for Happiness, we are doing just that – we are creating a free, fun, enjoyable way to connect more deeply with our communities; to commit to taking small daily or monthly actions that will make our own lives, and other people's, happier.

A huge thank you

I'd like to thank Vanessa King, the positive psychology expert for charity Action for Happiness, who has been our Obi Wan

THE 10 KEYS OF HAPPINESS

- 1 **GIVING:** Do things for others
- 2 **RELATING:** Connect with people
- 3 **EXERCISING:** Take care of your body
- 4 **APPRECIATING:** Notice the world around you
- 5 **TRYING OUT:** Keep learning new things
- 6 **DIRECTION:** Have goals to look forward to
- 7 **RESILIENCE:** Find ways to bounce back
- 8 **EMOTION:** Try to take a positive approach
- 9 **ACCEPTANCE:** Learn to be comfortable with yourself
- 10 **FIND MEANING:** Become a part of something bigger

alongside us this year – she's recorded a video for every key of the 10 Keys of Happiness, plus given advice and support. Going forward, she has inspired our new Happiness Club Book Club page in the magazine where we will read one book on happiness and positive psychology every month (and we will create a summary if you haven't actually got the time to read it!), with five questions to discuss so that we can continue our Happiness Clubs into 2016.

Plus, a big thank-you also goes to Mark Williamson, director of Action for Happiness, who helped me launch this initiative and invited me to speak on the same stage as the Action for Happiness patron, the Dalai Lama, in September. Now there's a happy moment I will never forget!

I'd also like to thank all the Happiness Clubbers up and down the country who email me every month, who blog for us and are part of our 'global happiness club'.

For all our other readers, I'd be delighted if you would like to join us in 2016 in our continuing efforts to make the world a happier place – all the information you need to register is in the box below. Here's to a happy 2016!

HOW TO SET UP YOUR HAPPINESS CLUB

If you haven't started a Happiness Club but would like to, it's very easy to do. All you need to register and start your own club can be found at: psychologies.co.uk/get-your-happiness-club-started.

Be inspired by video interviews with Action for Happiness director Mark Williamson and positive psychologist Vanessa King, offering tips and research about happiness. If you'd like to blog about your journey, email me: suzy.greaves@psychologies.co.uk.

Next month in **PSYCHOLOGIES**

DOSSIER

GET IT DONE!

Stop talking,
start doing - an
expert guide to
productivity



■ **Start the ignition...**

Meet the new gurus who will help you change your life

■ **The big leap**

How to be courageous when the chips are down

■ **Please, Mr Postman...**

The healing power of letter-writing

■ **PLUS:** Fitness holidays, how to stop self-sabotaging, and learn how to create your new 10-minute wind-down beauty regime

DON'T MISS the February issue – on sale 24 December

JOIN US!

In partnership with NOW Live Events, we're offering two life-changing workshops – how to do less and get more with **Shaa Wasmund**, and our new columnist **Chris Baréz-Brown** who is launching your weekly Wake Up call in 2016

DECEMBER WORKSHOP

Do less, get more:
how to work smart
and live life your way

DATE: 9 December 2015

VENUE: Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1 4RL

TIME: 7pm-8.30pm **COST:** £18

It's easy to find yourself doing more, more, more – and yet never really getting to where you want to be, says entrepreneur and bestselling author of *Do Less, Get More*, Shaa Wasmund.

After the death of her partner, she fell into an ultra-busy, ultra-controlled life as a coping mechanism, but soon realised this was a trap of her own making. Shaa knew something had to change, and so started to focus only on what really mattered. She found that by doing less, she was able to accomplish more and was happier, too.

IN THIS WORKSHOP, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to recognise if you're stuck in the 'busy trap' and what to do
- The things you should always do less of in your life, and the dramatic benefits you'll see when you do
- How to focus, prune and prioritise, and create a life that you really love
- The three rules to live by: do it, delegate it, or ditch it

For more about Shaa, see shaa.com



BOOK
TICKETS
NOW!

Join Chris
Baréz-Brown
(above) and Shaa
Wasmund (left) at
our next events



JANUARY WORKSHOP

The Great Wake Up! with Chris Baréz-Brown

DATE: Wednesday 6 January 2016

TIME: 7pm-8.30pm

VENUE: Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1 4R **COST:** £18

Bestselling author, speaker and creativity expert Chris Baréz-Brown will be launching his latest project, called The Great Wake Up! in 2016.

Chris specialises in helping people to reconnect with their inner genius and be confident in who they truly are. The Great Wake Up! is an experiment in how to find the time and energy to make your life a brighter, more fulfilling place. In essence, it's a strategy for life

liberation. Chris's entertaining presentation style is guaranteed to deliver life-changing results.

IN THIS WORKSHOP YOU WILL LEARN:

- Why we are running on autopilot
- What our lives could be like if we make even small changes
- Practical advice and tips on how to discover your true self
- Inspiring, interactive and energising exercises to create change

For more information, see page 90 and go to barez-brown.com/the-great-wake-up

THE PENNINGHAME PROCESS

a transformational inner journey

The Penninghame Process helps you to create the changes you want to bring into your life and understand that small changes in your inner self can create large changes externally.

The Penninghame Process is a six day residential course focusing on deep personal growth and self-awareness. Set in the beautiful surroundings of a Victorian estate located in South West Scotland, Penninghame House is surrounded by the beauty of nature and promises to inspire all those who stay there. This full programme of daily meditation and deep self-development will help you to gain new strength and self-awareness which will allow you to take responsibility for your own actions.

Does any of the following ring true for you? If the answer is yes, then you will benefit from The Penninghame Process:

- *I feel stuck in a rut, like the same cycle of issues keep showing up in my life*
- *I feel the need to start afresh and start to live my full potential as a human being*
- *I want to break free from destructive and dysfunctional emotional relationships and behaviours*
- *I have early childhood wounds and traumas in the past that I want to heal and move away from*
- *I want to escape my insecurities, loneliness and low self-esteem*
- *I often feel lost and lack motivation for life*
- *I want to improve my relationships – intimate, family, social and at work, but I don't know how*
- *I simply want to lead a more joyful, fulfilling and creative life*

The six day residential course costs £1,595 and this includes accommodation and all of your meals. The delicious and nutritious meals are prepared by a dedicated in-house chef who has a passion for natural food.



Saturday 27 February – Friday 4 March
Saturday 2 April – Friday 8 April
Saturday 10 September – Friday 16 September
Saturday 29 October – Friday 4 November

“ People often ask me what the process consists of, all I can say is that it's there to help you heal yourself in the most loving, kind and heroic way possible. I call it the greatest gift you could ever give yourself. Go. ”

Linzi

Please visit www.penninghame.org for further information or call Lynn on 01671 401414 for a confidential discussion.

Dossier NOURISH YOUR LOVE

Our relationships are one of the things we invest in most; we pour our trust, vulnerability, time and love into them. So what can we do when it feels like they might be lost to us; a waste of time, or different to the relationship we first entered into? This month's Dossier gives you ways to get back on track – and it only takes one person to initiate the change you want to see. We've rounded up all the advice, including what to do when the honeymoon period is over, why an affair doesn't always mean the end and how to argue well. Three women tell us about their relationships, and you can learn more about yours with our test: what kind of couple are you?

**“To be fully seen by somebody, then, and be loved anyhow
- this is a human offering that can border on miraculous”**

Elizabeth Gilbert, *Committed: A Skeptic Makes Peace with Marriage*

HOW TO SAVE YOUR RELATIONSHIP

No couple can linger in the honeymoon period forever, but what happens when you can't see a 'happily ever after' with your partner any more? Help is at hand from psychologists, marriage gurus and relationship experts, as **Anita Chaudhuri** rounds up the advice that will save your relationship

Can there be any area of life where hope triumphs over experience more than in romantic relationships? From song lyrics and novels to the silver screen, we are bombarded with the message that out there somewhere is a prince, and when we find him we will somehow magically live happily ever after. Cue power ballad crescendo. Credits roll. We walk off into the sunset.

The trouble is, no-one ever asks 'Then what?' What happens when the sparkly pixie dust wears off and it feels suspiciously like that prince we found is, if not sprouting actual webbed feet, then at least beginning to develop certain toad-like tendencies? Conflicts arise, and no wonder – we're all facing more stresses and demands, spinning more plates in the air than any previous generation. And it's our relationship with our significant other that often bears the brunt of these strains.

So what do you do when you feel things have gone so far off track that you wonder if you even have a future together at all, let alone a happy-ever-after one? We have five mindset shifts to help future-proof your love story.

I BOREDOM ISN'T NECESSARILY BAD NEWS

For many couples, the rot sets in when the honeymoon period wears off. But scientists have discovered this is caused by simple brain chemistry and is not a sign you have become incompatible or

“We all just want to feel safe and secure. All our tantrums, angers and resentments are a mask for our fear”

gone off each other. In her book *Why We Love: The Nature and Chemistry of Romantic Love* (Holt McDougal, £10.99), anthropologist Helen Fisher observes that the brains of people who are madly in love look markedly different from the brain scans of people who are not. She likened romantic love to being akin to an addiction, which triggers the area of the brain associated with craving and obsession.

Meanwhile, research by Donatella Marazziti at the University of Pisa reveals that in those who say they're in love (as well as in people with obsessive compulsive disorder), levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin, which has a calming effect, dip below normal levels. She found that in the first six months of falling in love, men and women had raised levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Levels of testosterone, which boosts sex drive, are also raised in women. But a year or so later, levels of a different hormone – oxytocin – kick in. Oxytocin is responsible for long-term bonding, often referred to in pop science as the 'cuddle hormone'. It makes sense, but unless you understand the biology, you can mistake this feeling of quiet contentment for boredom.

'When the excitement wears off and we feel bored, we tend to look at our relationships as the cause,' explains >>>



WHILE THE

REFRAIN.

While

While

love shall we - ren

SAY THAT YOU LOVE ME

Music by RAY MOROLLE.

me you love

REFRAIN.

Slowly.

I want to hear you

a tempo

Say

that

2 "SAY THAT GIRL?" (Brown, King & Henderson)
SAY THAT GIRL? Why oh! Why oh! Why?
Who did I love?

Why should I cry over you? Vocal Fox-Trot.

14

Have I Told You Lately That I Love You
Words and Music by

Moderately

VERSE

HAVE I TOLD

SCOTT WISEMAN

Could I tell
When the stars
Ev'ry dream

couples counsellor and author of *I Can't Get Over My Partner's Affair* (Marshall Method, £9.99), Andrew G Marshall. 'But the reason we're bored is usually because either we're not growing or our relationship is not growing at the same pace as we're growing. If you feel that you're doing the same thing over and over again, that's generally a sign something needs to change. Maybe you're frightened of saying or doing anything about it.'

'Two questions to ask yourself would be what have your dreams been for yourself, and what has blocked you? Try to access what this feeling is trying to tell you. So, it might feel like you're bored with your relationship when, in fact, you are facing a life stage problem and don't know what to do about it. Just because a problem pops up in one place, that doesn't necessarily mean it belongs there. It could be that your children are starting school or leaving home, and you've been so caught up in that you haven't contemplated your relationship in a very long time.'

2 YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR SCRIPT – AND SO CAN YOUR PARTNER

Psychologist and marriage guru John Gottman categorised five types of couple (to see which profile type you are, turn to page 70). Out of the five, Gottman analysed two couple types in the lab as unhappy; hostile and hostile-detached. He found that in general, the so-called hostile couples tended to stay unhappily married while the hostile-detached ones eventually got divorced.

The good news is that you can change your script, and research suggests it's well worth your while to make the first move. According to sociologists at Rutgers University, the happier a woman is within a marriage, the happier her husband is, regardless of how he feels about their relationship. And it doesn't even need to involve a big confrontation either.

David Waters is a psychotherapist who runs relationship workshops at The School of Life. 'The key to good communication is neither about needing to be right nor always getting your own way. It's about having the quiet confidence to just express what's going on for you. And it's not with the intention that anyone needs to change their behaviour. I encourage couples to gain

confidence to express their feelings, even if there are things which they fear or suspect their partner may not be comfortable hearing.'

Particularly if you're locked into a typical 'hostile' couple dynamic, you might read this advice and think 'yeah, but expressing feelings is what leads to row after row'. Waters stresses that by sharing true feelings, which involves vulnerability, things become much less accusatory than the attack mode of: 'you *never* help with...' or 'you *always* go to the pub when...'

'These types of statements are usually an exaggeration, and they're said in the heat of the moment because we're angry and frustrated,' he continues. 'Inevitably they raise the temperature and we're likely to get another attack thrown back at us. It can become a vicious cycle of one big barney after another.'

Waters suggests that a healthier approach might go like this, using the topical issue of Christmas household chores as an example. 'If you told your partner "I'm nervous about Christmas because I'm remembering how things were in the past. I often feel frustrated because I feel I end up doing so

much. I get so tired. I feel a bit overwhelmed, so I thought it would be useful to share that before it all starts", you might be implying something, but you're not accusing him of being a terrible husband. You often get to a richer, more meaningful conversation because you're really expressing feelings rather than telling the other person how they should or shouldn't behave.'

More troublesome still is the hostile-detached type. 'One of my clients put it like this,' explains Marshall. 'She said "we've been having a silent argument for five years". Often there are lots of issues under the surface where one person has seethed while the other has tiptoed, or a combination of the two. There's a load of things you don't say because it'll rock the boat and spoil everything. The only way you can stop it all bubbling to the surface is to switch off the feelings that feel unacceptable – feelings like anger and resentment. Unfortunately, we can't choose the feelings we switch off. It's not like a switchboard where you can switch some off and put others through. So what happens is you end up switching *all* your feelings off and you're left with a sort of grey boredom. Which is when people can end up having affairs, just to feel something again.'

>>>

3 UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU WANT – AND WHAT YOU NEED

It was British psychologist John Bowlby who pioneered the concept of attachment patterns – the way our needs were met in early childhood. Recognising our pattern can help us to understand the strengths and fault lines in our adult relationships. The four types are secure, ambivalent, avoidant and disorganised. So for example, if we grew up with a parent we couldn't rely on, we might grow up to find we're clingy and suspicious with our husband, displaying classic signs of separation anxiety. Fear of abandonment might be our pattern.

'Deep down we all want to feel safe and secure, and we all want to feel that we can ultimately trust our partners, that they will hold us when things feel confusing, worrying or odd,' says Waters. 'It's a simple idea that really resonates. All our tantrums, angers and resentments are a mask for our fear. We're actually asking "do you really love me?" and "do I feel safe here?" or "do I feel held by you?" It's a very useful idea to share with couples in conflict.'

Waters explores questions with couples such as the best ways for each of them to feel safe. This often explains why one half of a couple needs a phonecall if the other is going to be home late, for example. 'Fear of abandonment causes us to get angry and lash out. If our mother didn't respond to our cry, it could be a matter of life and death. We carry that feeling into adulthood. If the love partner is not making us feel safe, if we're ignored, or if we think they're having an affair, we get so frightened it might feel like life and death.'

4 TRY TO STAND IN EACH OTHER'S SHOES

If you discover your partner has been cheating on you, clearly that's going to be a point where you might believe your relationship is beyond repair. However, even in these circumstances there is some hope. 'The Chinese symbol for crisis combines the words danger and opportunity,' Marshall points out. 'Initially, it is very easy to see the danger part, and hard to see any opportunity. But there's one advantage about dealing with infidelity. Couples with

affairs generally arrive in my office the most angry, but leave the happiest. The reason? Most couples tiptoe around the hot topics – he hates her mother, she earns way more than him – you just don't go there. But after an affair, couples are willing to put everything on the table. If you're willing to try and save things, you go to those places you'd never dare to talk about before. Other couples never go there.'

Marshall adds that when a partner has had an affair, the wronged party will often ask 'why did you do it?' and the reply will be a rhetorical 'why do you think I did it?' He says: 'It's easy to bat that away, but generally what you have to do is not only stand in your partner's shoes, but take on board from where they are standing everything they see to be true. You may not agree with them, but it's their version of the world. The truth of a relationship is a combination of those viewpoints.'

"Your partner can't read your mind, so if something is upsetting you and you can't let it go – gently explain what it is and how it makes you feel"

5 CELEBRATE EACH OTHER

Gottman's research showed that in a happy marriage, when discussing problems, couples make at least five times as many positive statements to and about each other and the relationship as negative ones. 'Frequently couples come to see me who may have forgotten about the early stage of their relationship, perhaps kids came along, they're tired or have money worries. They forget the thing they had in the beginning,' says Waters. 'I was working with one such couple and the aggression between them was very passionate. I asked a simple question. "What was it that attracted you to each other when you first met?" The change was instantaneous, like the sun breaking through clouds. Soon they were smiling, accessing that photo album of happy memories. It changed from something that felt so angry to something loving and gentle.'

You don't need to be in couples therapy to do this, he adds. Simply ask your partner to spend 10 or 15 minutes reminiscing about the early days of your relationship, from the silly 'remember you used to wear that funny hat?' to shared good times and an appreciation of the other person's good traits. 'If you can start sharing in a nostalgic and playful way, it indicates there is still hope for your relationship.'

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS GRAYNER/TRUNK ARCHIVE



ADVICE

DEALING WITH ARGUMENTS

Conflict is part and parcel of our relationships, so how should we approach it? Sarah Abell, writer, speaker and coach, shares her advice on arguing well

Conflict in a relationship can be tiring, frustrating, and monotonous. When a couple is stuck in the same arguments, even small disagreements can make you feel trapped in a circle of conflict. But the good news is that if one person within the relationship is motivated to improve things, the relationship can and will change.

We all have our way of dealing with conflict. Perhaps you have to win an argument at all costs, or maybe you long to keep the peace? The key factor when it comes to the success of a relationship is not whether you tend to sulk or shout as an individual during conflict, but how you interact as a couple. Over 40 years of research, psychologist John Gottman has identified five conflict types for couples and found some have better outcomes than others. See if you can recognise your conflict type below.

AVOIDANT

- You're not very emotionally expressive and avoid arguing. You focus on compatibility rather than differences.
- You think talking about difficulties makes them worse – problems will sort themselves out if you leave them be.
- You tend to be quite independent people with separate interests and refrain from trying to influence each other. There is warmth and respect between you.

VOLATILE

- If you are a volatile couple, everyone knows it. Your interactions are intensely emotional and expressive.
- You love to debate, and believe honesty and connection are important in a relationship. You have no secrets.
- You fight passionately and love making up. Your sex life is a high priority. Jealousy can cause friction, but there is also a lot of humour and fun in your relationship.

VALIDATING

- If you're a validating couple, you're likely to be generally

positive and calm. You are very empathetic and take time to understand and appreciate each other's points of view.

- You choose your battles. You might get heated on some topics but usually, one of you will back down.
- You tend to be good-natured in interactions and use humour. Being friends matters more than total honesty.

HOSTILE

- Hostile couples consist of one avoider and one validator.
- Often the validator wants to talk issues out and the more avoidant one doesn't want to. If you are the validator, you see your partner as uncaring and if you are the avoider, you think your partner is needy and negative.
- You aren't very good at empathising with each other; there's lots of criticism, blaming, contempt and whining. You just wish your partner would accept that you're right.

HOSTILE-DETACHED

- One of you is naturally a validator and the other is volatile. It is a toxic combination.
- The validator will only endure the conflict up until a certain point and then they shut down, but the volatile one is like a dog with a bone unwilling to let it drop.
- This relationship drains you of energy. You're often blowing up or giving each other the silent treatment. This is not a fun relationship to be in.

All conflict is not equal. If you recognise yourselves in any of the first three types – that's good. According to Gottman, yours is more likely to be a happy and stable relationship. However, the other two types of relationships are more likely to be unhappy, and hostile-detached couples are the most likely to split up. If you're stuck in a toxic relationship, it would be worth seeking help from a therapist or coach. Visit my website: nakedhedgehogs.com, or welldoing.org for expert help. But whatever your style, there are things you can do to improve your approach to conflict as an individual and as a couple.



PHOTOGRAPH: GALLERY/STOCK

TEN TOP TIPS FOR HEALTHY CONFLICT

- 1** Raise issues early. Don't let them fester. Your partner can't read your mind, so if something is upsetting you and you can't let it go – gently explain what it is and how it makes you feel.
- 2** Pick your moment. Arguments are more likely to escalate if either or both of you is tired, hungry, hormonal, etc. In order to have a constructive conversation, you may need to sleep, eat or calm down first.
- 3** Say what you mean. When we're upset we avoid saying the last 10 per cent – the most important bit. If you're sad or angry, let your partner know what's really going on for you.
- 4** Remain respectful. Disagreeing is OK, but showing contempt is likely to be toxic to your relationship.
- 5** Don't opt out. Non-responsiveness can come across as not caring. Take time to listen and understand.
- 6** Don't get defensive. Own your part of the problem rather than trying to lay all the blame on your partner. You might win the battle, but you will probably lose the war.
- 7** Don't generalise. Avoid making statements like 'you never' and 'you always'.
- 8** Use 'we' rather than 'I' or 'you'. Researchers have discovered that couples who use 'we' in conversations are more likely to be happy in their relationships. Try to find 'us' solutions when you tackle disagreements.
- 9** Keep short accounts. Apologising and forgiving regularly will help to stop resentments and hurt building up.
- 10** Maintain a 5:1 ratio. John Gottman found that happy couples tend to have at least five positive interactions for every negative one. So, make sure that both of you are constantly investing in your relationship. This will mean that you will be able to weather the storms better when they come.

LOVE CHRONICLES

Every relationship is unique, and whether we manage to keep our relationships alive through tough times, or end up saying goodbye, we all have a story to learn from. Here, three women share their stories of love and loss

INTERVIEWS ANITA CHAUDHURI PHOTOGRAPHS LEONIE MORSE

“We have an awareness that we both need to tend the relationship as much as we can”

TARA GUHA, NOVELIST

‘In the past, I was what you’d call a serial monogamist. In my career as a music PR I had lived and worked all over the place and still hadn’t met the right man. I’d get to the stage where things didn’t feel quite right and start to think about moving on. In my mid-thirties, I turned to internet dating. After yet another failed experience with that, one Christmas my brother suggested I come out with him and his friends.

That night, one of his friends whom I had known since I was 14, Dave, was there. It took a while to get over that feeling of: “you’re my brother’s friend!” but we started dating. And just nine months later, I discovered I was pregnant. We weren’t even living in the same city at the time.

The fact that we’d been together such a short time before having a baby has meant we have an awareness that we both need to tend the relationship as much as we can. Had we been together for a long time, we might not have. So we’ve always used babysitters to enable us to have evenings out together and

we’ve been rigid about boundaries around bedtime. We have two children now and they always sleep in their own beds so we can enjoy adult time.

In terms of keeping the relationship alive, we have a good sex life and we think that’s really important. Often when kids come along, that can fall by the wayside. At least with us, when we had children, that side of things was still fresh so we made the effort.

I gave up my job and that could have been tough on the relationship, too. But after my first daughter was born, I decided to have a go at writing a novel and I was lucky enough to win the Luke Bitmead Bursary – the largest UK prize for unpublished authors. Becoming a writer has been very good for the balance of our relationship.

The one thing I would say is that because we didn’t have this golden period pre-kids to look back on, it means we don’t put the past on a pedestal. Instead, we just enjoy and celebrate where we are now.’

‘Untouchable Things’ by Tara Guha (Legend Press) is out now





“The course enabled us to handle things in a positive way”

ZOE VICKERMAN, CREATIVE DIRECTOR, LONDON CHILDREN'S BALLET

‘My parents had been happily married for 30 years when they went on The Marriage Course. Both of them loved it. Other friends had done it, too. Although the course started at the Holy Trinity Brompton, the church that is home to the Christian Alpha course, it’s designed for couples with or without a Christian faith.

My husband Oscar and I married in 2011 and we had a pretty tough first year. We come from very different family backgrounds and we just missed each other’s point of view on a lot of things. I had a secure, happy upbringing in an English family, whereas Oscar grew up in South Africa and his parents broke up when he was very young. The ways we handled disagreements were very different. For example, Oscar would assume it was going to end in divorce, whereas that would not even have entered my head. There was a lot of anxiety and fear between us – it almost always came out

of different expectations of what a marriage looks like and how the other person ought to communicate.

The course runs over seven weeks. You turn up and the room is set with lots of little tables for two. It feels like a date night; you have supper and the facilitators talk through the topic of the night. There’s no airing of dirty laundry with other members of the group, it’s just between the two of you. You get homework to dig deeper into the ideas during the week ahead, which we found really revealing.

This last year, my husband has started his own company, which is incredibly stressful, we’ve had a bereavement and I’m about to have another baby. The course enabled us to handle things in a positive way. It gives you a toolbox to fix things when you’re knocking your heads together. I honestly don’t know where we’d be as a couple if we hadn’t done it.’

For more information, see themarriagecourses.org

HAIR AND MAKE-UP: KATY BRODY (TARA), SADAF AHMAD (ZOE), NINA SAGRI (ZOE)

“I remember thinking, ‘I can’t do this again next year’”

VENA RAMPHAL, ROMANCE AND SEX COACH

‘My husband and I were together for five years before we got married. We hadn’t lived together, so the wedding marked the start of a lovely new stage for us. I was in my mid-twenties. I was happy, but still figuring out who I was and what I wanted in life.

Three years in, we were growing in different directions. I really meant my wedding vows, so deciding to get a divorce was the most difficult choice I’ve ever made. He was a good man and I was doing my best to be a good wife – but I was miserable. I realised I could either stay in the relationship and let my soul die or I could be terrifyingly brave and get a divorce.

There were several flashpoints during the last Christmas we were together. One evening, we were having dinner with his friends. I was listening to the same stale jokes from their past that I’d heard 100 times before and I wanted to run from the room. I remember thinking, “I can’t do this again next year”. I felt trapped in a harmless, but lifeless, situation.

I now coach other people to speak of divorce in terms of completion and to honour the relationship as they leave it. This is the best way to have a truly fresh start. It made me fully available for new adventures in all aspects of my life. After my marriage, I enjoyed several years of polyandry; I relished the experience of loving many men. I’m now in a monogamous relationship that feels grounded and adventurous. Would I marry again? Honestly, I don’t know. What I do know is that every one of my relationships has been part of my happily ever after.’

For more about Vena, see venaramphal.com



TEST

WHAT KIND OF COUPLE ARE YOU?

Discover which type of couple you are* by answering the following questions as honestly as possible, and ask your partner to do it as well!

1 You and your other half go out for the evening...

- This is exceptional, usually we prefer to stay at home
- Your partner usually decides when and where to go
- ★ We usually have a date night at the weekend
- ▲ Nothing out of the ordinary, we're always together
- ◆ We had to juggle diaries to fit it in

2 In terms of taste (books, films, etc) and ideas (political, cultural, spiritual)...

- ▲ We're rather different and that's fine
- ◆ We each have our preferences and it sometimes gives rise to heated discussions between us
- ★ We have little in common and we don't have meaningful conversations
- We share views on most things
- I end up pandering to their tastes

3 When a conflict is brewing in your relationship, you tend to:

- Let your partner have their own way to avoid an argument
- Wait it out
- ◆ Provoke a blazing row so you can both get things out in the open
- ▲ Speak calmly
- ★ Blame your partner for causing trouble

4 How often do you socialise with your friends?

- ▲ Frequently, they often come round

- Now and then – we have a few very close friends
- ◆ We often all go out together
- ★ We see our friends separately a lot
- Only very occasionally

5 The words that best summarise the goals of your relationship are:

- Security and stability
- Tenderness and support
- ▲ Mutual exchange and openness to the world
- ◆ Motivation and assistance
- ★ Comfort and safety

6 Who in your relationship brings new ideas or suggests adventures?

- ▲ We share these discussions
- ★ Usually my partner does
- ◆ About equal between us
- Neither of us
- Sometimes it's me, but mostly it's my partner

7 You have to work late and your partner finds there's not much at home to cook for dinner.

- ★ They wait for you – you'll have gone to the supermarket on the way home
- They call you to ask what to do
- ◆ They order a takeaway
- ▲ They go to the supermarket
- Together, you make a meal out of leftovers when you get home

8 You both eat dinner:

- Every day at vaguely the same time
- At 7:30pm sharp

- ◆ Whatever time you both get home
- ★ Often at the same time
- ▲ It's flexible

9 The plumber has to come round on Wednesday morning. So...

- ★ You're the one who has to wait in
- Your partner said they couldn't wait in because of work
- Your partner books the day off, viewing it as a good opportunity for a mid-week break
- ◆ You negotiate according to your diaries
- ▲ Your partner waits in

10 Who makes the decisions about finance, holidays, home interiors, weekend activities, etc?

- ★ You do the home stuff, your partner does the rest
- ◆ Both, after discussing things
- There are no set rules
- We decide together, except in certain areas
- ▲ Every decision is taken by mutual agreement

11 Your relationship is more like:

- A nest
- ◆ A springboard
- A castle
- ▲ A ship
- ★ A train

NOW SEE HOW MANY TIMES YOU PICKED EACH SYMBOL, AND TURN THE PAGE TO FIND YOUR PROFILE

PHOTOGRAPH: GALLERY STOCK. TEST BY GILLES DONADA AND ISABELLE NIOUET. *RESEARCH BY PSYCHOLOGISTS (JENNIFER LALANNE, ERIC TIDMER AND RENÉE VY) IDENTIFIES COUPLE STYLES THAT PEOPLE TYPICALLY ADOPT TO LIVE TOGETHER



MOSTLY ●

COCOON

This couple style is characterised by a fusion of desires. You share a lot of common interests and activities, and have a network of friends who act like extended family – it's likely your own family backgrounds are both very stable. Nothing makes you happier than spending time in your cosy bubble, just the two of you or in the company of that chosen inner circle. You're not interested in broadening your horizons, or even in engaging with people from different backgrounds to yours. Tenderness, support and relaxation are priorities. Social and professional ambition are foreign concepts to both of you and you're not particularly bothered about making a mark in your community. At home, you share chores and responsibilities. Decisions are taken by mutual agreement and each of your opinions matter equally.

Try this: Make a date to see friends on your own once a week. Try to develop one hobby or activity that you can do without your partner, be it a book group or volunteering.

MOSTLY ■

FORT KNOX

Your couple style aspires to a complete merging of interests. It's important to you that you and your partner share the same activities, be it sports and hobbies or taste in holiday destinations. You would do anything to avoid conflict and you'd prefer to agree with your other half in order to have a quiet life rather than creating an upsetting scene. Your key couple values are functioning consensus, similarity, security and solidarity. But within your couple, the differences are more marked. You leave it to your partner to make new connections or suggest different things to do. At home, it's you who does most of the domestic and parenting tasks. You may well yearn for more tenderness from your partner, as well as a greater sense of security and for meaningful distractions to alleviate the humdrum of your life.

Try this: Sit down with your partner and work out how to mix things up a bit. Put them in charge of the housework one night a week, while you take over the planning for a new outing or activity for the weekend.

MOSTLY ◆

VIVE LA DIFFERENCE!

This couple style emphasises equality and autonomy. The richness of your life is gleaned more from your differences than your similarities. The communication between you is about a healthy exchange of views and negotiation rather than on trying to come to a consensus. You both put a high value on going out into the world, meeting people and

enjoying new experiences. At home, chores and duties are conducted by one or other of you equally. No one is in charge of any particular role. You find this approach is a sound emotional investment where you each enjoy the other's support, sympathy and humour. You don't set much store by ritual or habit, finding that improvisation, innovation and finding new ways to do things are more productive.

Try this: As an experiment, you might try introducing a set ritual or routine to your life, such as a Tuesday night date night. You don't always need to reinvent the wheel!

MOSTLY ▲

BEST FRIENDS FOREVER

If your relationship was a film genre, it would be a buddy movie! You have a great desire to merge, and enjoy similar ideals, tastes and activities. You rarely go anywhere without each other. But although being in agreement is important to you as a couple, you don't cut yourselves off from the world. You like getting involved in community life and have great relationships with extended family, friends and neighbours. Values, such as support and security, combine with your willingness to engage with the world and become involved in both your respective professional and community lives.

You've no problem sharing the chores at home, and your partner is probably above average when it comes to lending a hand. Your default setting is to take decisions jointly. In general, you like to focus on being spontaneous and flexible, rather than sticking to rigid routines.

Try this: Once in a while you might want to rent a box set, order in a takeaway and spend some quality time on a date night at home, just the two of you.

MOSTLY ★

PARALLEL LIVES

Your couple thrives on individuality more than fusion. You each enjoy your own ideas, tastes and activities, but this can put a good deal of space between you. You can be reluctant to present a united front where you open your home to family, friends and acquaintances.

The division of roles and functions is quite clear. Your partner expects you to provide home comforts and support them in the advancement of their career. They take the initiative when it comes to your social life, arranging holidays and nights out. Your domain is the domestic arena and your role is to ease stress, smooth over conflicts and disagreements, and support each other. The key concepts for your couple style are order and security.

Try this: Occasionally, you might enjoy breaking out of your traditional gender roles. Perhaps explore signing up for a DIY or car maintenance course, or get your partner to agree to cook dinner one night a week.



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1 DO YOU FEEL...

- Trapped or stuck in an unhappy relationship?
- Misunderstood by your partner?
- On the brink of breaking up, or close to divorce?
- Bored or restless – the honeymoon period is over?
- Helpless and confused?
- Unloved?
- Motivated to try to change your relationship for the better?

2 WHAT WOULD IT BE LIKE IF YOU COULD...

- Singlehandedly turn your relationship around?
- Start communicating again with your partner?
- Learn how to stop arguing?
- Discover new skills and techniques to create an atmosphere of love again?
- Stop feeling disappointed?
- Find a new sense of hope for the future?
- Save your relationship... *and* flourish in it?

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'How to Save Your Relationship' is led by Sarah Abell, *Psychologies* columnist, top relationship expert and author of *Inside Out: How to Have Authentic Relationships with Everyone in Your Life*. Sign up for details of a free three-day trial at psychologies.co.uk/life-labs-online-courses.

GOOD THOUGHTS



“Each of us is born with a box of matches inside us, but we can’t strike them all by ourselves”

LAURA ESQUIVEL

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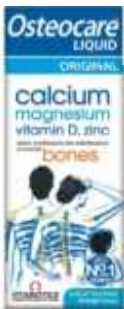
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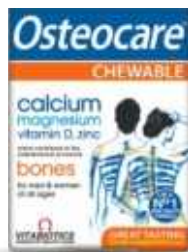
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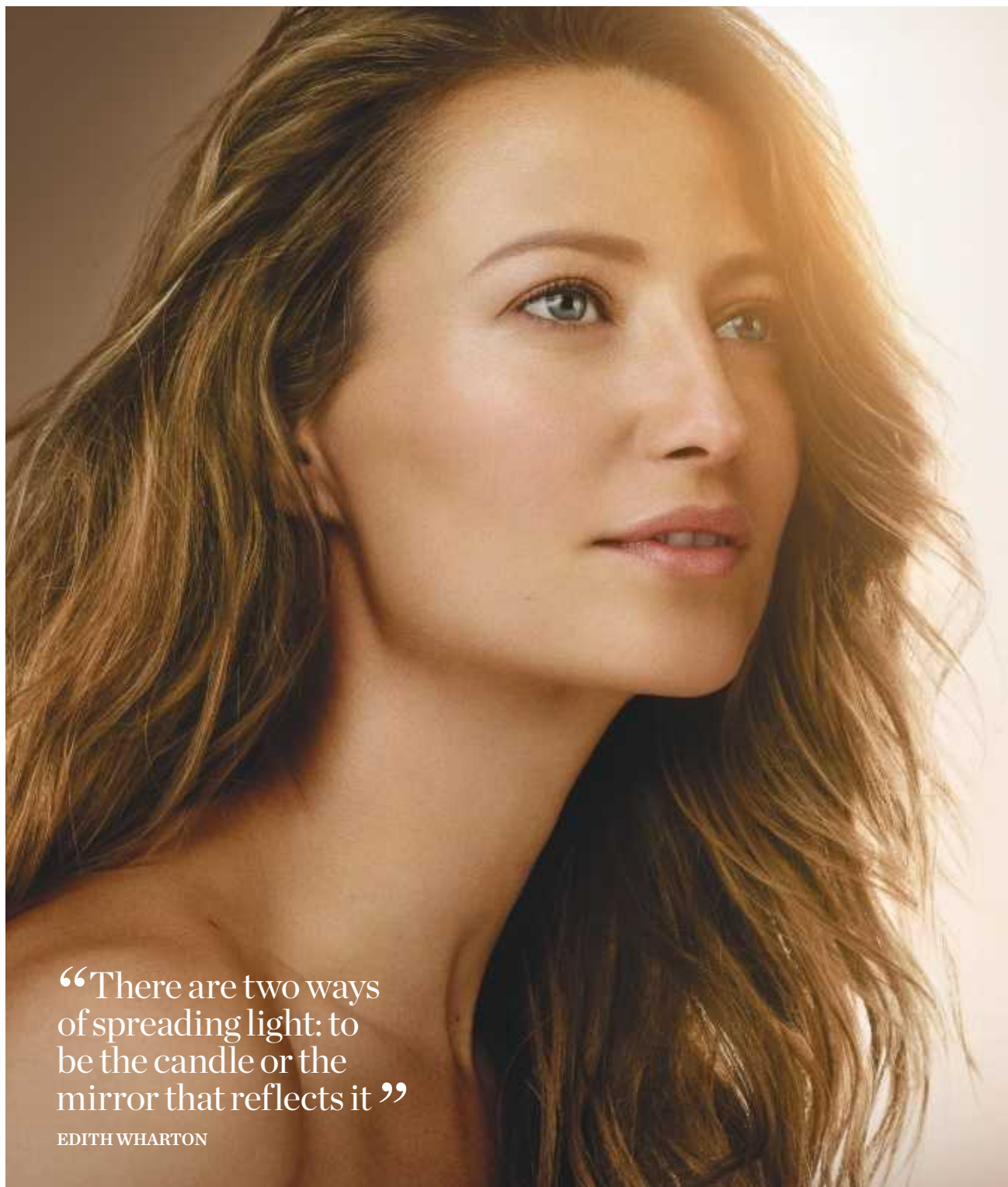

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“There are two ways
of spreading light: to
be the candle or the
mirror that reflects it”

EDITH WHARTON

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Heather

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1 ON THE BLINK

A subtle flash upon lashes is the easiest way to experiment – the best tool we've found for this is the new Tom Ford Lash Tips Mascara, £35. Choose from Pure Cobalt or Burnished Gold – both vibrantly pigmented but subtly shimmery, for grown-up glamour without gratuity.



5 TALES OF A CULT

Hard Candy broadened my beauty horizons with its rainbow shades, dense pigments and cheeky product names. Founder Dineh Mohajer has now launched Smith & Cult nail polish (£19) in dynamic finishes such as Vegas Post Apocalyptic (above) inspired by her love of art, music and literature. She's nailed it.

2 UP IN SMOKE
Timothy Han is the brains behind Edition/Perfumes – thoughtful and collectable gifts (hint, hint). His latest is gritty, grown up and smoke-filled; a seriously sexy counterbalance to shimmer and shine.



Edition/
Perfumes
On The Road,
£120/60ml

This month... let's play



Glitter, frost, shimmer... now happily twinkling atop my tree but rarely making its way onto my actual personage. This year, however, I'm excited by the many new takes on beauty bedeckery available – and how affordable and easily applicable it is. From metallic body art to lash crystals, I've also been inspired by make-up artist Lan Nguyen-Grealis, whose exquisite book *Art & Makeup* (Laurence King, £28) takes beauty to a newly creative level. Twenty years ago, I delighted in bindis, shimmer and face paint and, says Nguyen-Grealis, that's always permissible (at any age) during party season. Now in my thirties, it's less playgirl and more one-woman-play... no longer taking things so seriously, but still shy of the whole spangled shebang.

Emine

Health + wellness director



3 FLASH LIGHT

I remember using silver and gold pens to decorate my hands during dull school lessons. Fast-forward to now and Flash Tattoos, from £20, offer chic designs, in a range of sizes to adorn the wrist, cheek, arm or nape of the neck. They glide on, stay put, and catch the light beautifully. Expect compliments!

4 TALKING HEADS
If hair begins to feel like an afterthought, take a dip with Swedish brand Maria Nila's fun pigmented colour masques. Wash in, wash out, for a flash of pink, violet or blue.



Maria Nila
Colour
Refresh,
£9.99

MINDFUL BEAUTY

Beauty brands have been doing some soul-searching, and are on a mission to become your personal wellness coach – nurturing body, mind and soul on increasingly deeper, more meaningful levels...

WORDS SUZANNE DUCKETT PHOTOGRAPHS TRUNK ARCHIVE

You don't need another article telling you how time-pressed, stressed or overwhelmed you feel. Or, that the latest scented candle or bath oil will instantly wash your worries away (because, of course, it won't). Yet, there's a tangible shift in beauty, with smarter and more 'enlightened' brands dealing as seriously in emotions as lotions. The demand for 'wellness' is blurring the lines between vanity and sanity, physical and psychological, meaning our beauty needs are rapidly evolving. 'Brands have had to become more nurturing and less punishing, more self-aware, less superficial, kinder – making us feel great rather than down about ourselves,' says Tracey Woodward, advisor to Marks & Spencer beauty. 'During busy, anxiety-inducing times, we need all the support we can get.'

MEET THE PANEL

Experts and ambassadors are the latest ingredients being added to the ranges that want to really get under our skin. Take Neom Organics, founded by Nicola Elliott, a brand dedicated to supporting women to make time to improve their wellbeing. 'Real beauty and inner wellbeing needs a holistic but practical approach now,' she says. 'A good night's sleep

ritual doesn't just include a soporific scented candle or bath oil; it also requires the right nutrition, perhaps a Pilates stretch to ease physical tension, or breathing techniques to help us relax,' says Elliott. She has put together the Neom Wellbeing Board which includes leading authorities in sleep, mindfulness, fitness, Pilates, therapeutic massage, psychology and nutrition – the sort of experts you'd usually find in top complementary health clinics. Their advice is widely readable at neomorganics.com (and the new online Neom magazine), and filtering through into Neom products which will soon all contain lifestyle tips and guidance to better support you alongside the product you have purchased.

The big companies are also recruiting wellness warriors;

“Brands have had to become more nurturing and less punishing, more self-aware, less superficial – making us feel great rather than down about ourselves” >>>



>>> Elemis has nutritionist Amelia Freer, author of *Eat.Nourish.Glow* (Harper Thorsons, £16.99) among its ambassadors to impart her expert advice online. And Vichy's expert panel includes dermatologist Dr Anjali Mahto, and nutritional therapist Gabriela Peacock, who offer their expertise during product development. Complementary health indeed.

MINDFULNESS BOTTLED

Beauty is also tapping into our new cultural awareness of mindfulness, meditation and downtime. Aromatherapy Associates' latest product **Clear Mind Bath and Shower Oil**, £48 (exclusive to Liberty), supports anyone seeking a metaphorical 'pause' button. Containing camomile, frankincense, palmarosa and bergamot, it helps release the mind, while grounding you in the present moment, creating space, peace and clarity. Just what we need right now.

'Our minds are progressing rapidly and technology is the single biggest factor in changing the way we live,' co-founder Geraldine Howard says. 'It has sped everything up and we are in constant communication, living with the pressure of the unexpected coming at us 24/7. We need to counterbalance this... and I also know that quality aromatherapy oils have the most profound and measurable effect on our minds – I call it "cosmetics for the psyche",' she adds.

This Works was founded with the sole aim of creating products that really make a difference (the clue is in the name). Tackling what has become a primary health concern for many – lack of sleep – This Works' founder Kathy Phillips ploughed heavy resources into the development of an incomparably effective sleep aid. The new **Sleep Plus Pillow Spray**, £25, has been clinically proven to increase sleep time by three hours for those with disturbed sleep.

THE BEAUTY OF GIVING

Game-changing big brands with particularly punchy influence are muscling in on the act, too. Sure, the bottom line is to sell products, but it now goes hand-in-hand with sharing important insights and starting crucial conversations – from accepting ourselves to challenging lack of diversity.

The Sanctuary Spa's latest #LetGo campaign, in collaboration with life strategist Jenni Trent-Hughes, came about from a survey Sanctuary Spa conducted with over 5,000 women. It showed the increased pressure women feel they are under: to be more, do more and give more, resulting in stress and imbalance. The survey revealed a whopping seven out of 10 women feel under pressure to be 'perfect'; nearly half were feeling moderately or extremely stressed and even worse, four out of 10 felt they were about to burn out. Trent-Hughes calls this 'the rise in the cult of Never Good Enough – women who over-achieve and under-believe'.

A PERSONAL TOUCH

Remember that catchy song from classic musical *The King and I*? 'Getting to know you, getting to know all about you. Getting to like you, getting to hope you like me.' Well, it may as well be beauty's new jingle because popularity and personalisation is paramount with brands trying to connect with you.

Companies such as Boots, Superdrug and feelunique.com are using clever software to track your purchasing habits, pinpointing parts of your persona to make more astute recommendations on products you'll love (so you'll hopefully love them back). It does set alarm bells ringing... but there's no doubt that our online shopping experiences are becoming increasingly optimised, more practical and faster than ever before.

Treatment-booking site wahanda.com's founding ethos was based on the link between beauty and happiness, hence its tagline: 'book yourself fabulous'. 'Personalisation is the new frontier for online,' says wahanda.com co-founder Lopo Champalimaud, 'and it's only just beginning!'

Alexia Inge, the brains and heart behind cultbeauty.co.uk agrees. 'This is the wonder of honest online dialogue. We're forming relationships here – people are much more likely to tell you what they really think and feel from the comfort of their sofa.'

'We are on a mission to help women stop, relax and breathe, and this is just the beginning,' says Louise Moore, head of product development and marketing for Sanctuary Spa. According to Moore, it's been a resounding success with women pledging to change their priorities, 'taking stock of what they value in life and making sure they don't lose sight of it among their hectic routines and daily bustle,' she says.

The brand bareMinerals' mission statement: 'we exist to make a positive difference in women's lives', has been demonstrated in numerous ways since the company started 20 years ago. Its digital community and message boards (thriving long before social media) have become a platform for thousands of women. 'The beauty industry has a responsibility to present positive images and tell positive stories to women,' says MD Leslie Blodgett. Earlier this year, it sponsored the Be Real Campaign aiming to help change attitudes on body image and put health above appearance. According to Be Real's research, 'low body confidence is damaging lives from a young age – 60 per cent of adults are ashamed of the way they look. The knock-on effect can be depression, self-harm and addiction.' This is serious stuff, and brands such as bareMinerals are not simply paying lip service here. By 2017, Be Real wants to be in 3,000 schools around the country promoting body >>>



MINDFUL BEAUTY PICKS

Products to make you feel good and look good



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Tranquillity
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Treatment
Candle, £36



bareMinerals
Marvellous
Moxie Lipgloss,
£16



Elemis
Pro-Radiance
Illuminating
Eye Balm, £34



Sanctuary Spa
Luxury Bath
Float, £10



This Works
Sleep Plus +
Pillow Spray,
£35

“We are on a mission to help women take stock of what they value in life and ensure they don’t lose sight of it in the daily bustle”

>>> confidence (find out more at berealcampaign.co.uk).

Beauty’s philanthropists, like all of us, need to make a living. But behind every good beauty brand there is, more than likely, a woman who wants to make a difference to her fellow women by not only creating exceptional products, but by also creating opportunities. In October 1992, Evelyn Lauder launched the Breast Cancer Awareness (BAC) campaign, raising £38m to date for research from sales on pink ribbons and specially designed pink beauty products. Now, every October is Breast Cancer Awareness month, on the radars of millions, and led for Lauder by Elizabeth Hurley.

Also making a difference is make-up artist Bobbi Brown, who says ‘a woman is most beautiful when she looks like herself and confidence is everything. But a little make-up can’t hurt.’ And every penny of the **Pretty Powerful Pot Rouge**, £19.50, and **Pretty Powerful Mascara**, £20, goes towards the Pretty Powerful Campaign for Women & Girls, whose mission is to empower women and girls through education.

Empowering women has also been behind many of the beauty industry’s most philanthropic endeavours. *Psychologies* editor Suzy Greaves attended a screening of the film *Suffragette* with Jane Wurwand, co-founder of Dermalogica. In 2011, Wurwand founded FITE (Financial Independence

Through Entrepreneurship), a global women’s initiative where the vast majority of the ownership and workforce is female. Today, FITE provides access to loans and business resources, supporting education and leadership training, and helping amplify women’s voices around the world (sobering stat alert: while women make up 66 per cent of the world’s workforce, they earn only 10 per cent of the world’s salary).

VALUABLE SUPPORT

Dove continues its work with children and young adults with self-esteem issues and this year, sponsored the Women in the World conferences where Hillary Clinton, Angelina Jolie and Cara Delevingne spoke. Supporting education, L’Oréal Paris rewards 10 exceptional women with \$10,000 each to serve their communities and champions women in science with the L’Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science programme.

‘Philanthropy has always been at the heart of CEW,’ says Caroline Neville, president of CEW UK, a not-for-profit organisation supporting women in the beauty industry who have, to date, given £150,000 to the Eve Appeal, which conducts life-saving research into gynaecological cancer, and support for young women via homeless charity, Centrepont. ‘Funds come from those in the beauty industry who are members of CEW [Cosmetic Executive Women],’ says Neville. ‘We think we move beauty and women’s health forward together.’

While it’s easy to be cynical about deep and meaningful messages, if a business has emotional intelligence, philanthropy and self-improvement in its founding ethos, it’s already moved beyond aesthetic realms. After all, beauty products are intimate, personal and connectible – and that is the bottom line.

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The POWER *of a* REST DAY

We often go into a new year determined to become fitter and healthier. But what should you do when dedication spirals into obsession? Author and triathlete Lucy Fry shares her surprising tip for boosting energy

Here I am, sitting on the sofa, aching muscles covered in Deep Heat, trying to tie up my running shoes. From the outside, I look fit, healthy and entirely ready to exercise. But internally, there's a major conflict going on: I know I'm overtired, muscles sore from yesterday's gym session and eyes burning from hours spent staring at a screen. A voice in my head says – *you're exhausted – maybe rest?* But another one tells me I need an endorphin release and should tick the fitness box or I won't have a good evening.

You've got to do it, says that voice. If I can just get myself out of the door, I can (literally) run away from my buzzing mind, pushing myself to a point where all I can focus on is my breath, my feet and keeping going. After that, the feel-good chemicals will rush in, anaesthetising my inherent restlessness, quieting the anxious brain-chatter and lessening the guilt.

It's only a short-term solution, of course – a perverse kind of immediate gratification. Most of us know on some level that

pushing through exhaustion is self-defeating and (like drinking on a hangover) the consequences are only being delayed. Yet still there are those who, like me, struggle to meet their own high standards and as such, set themselves up for failure or burnout. We will never, ever, be good enough, whatever we do.

OVERDOING IT

Where does this guilt around resting and relaxing come from, I wonder? Why do I feel so driven to always *do* rather than allowing myself the odd *don't* – to slow down, and stop, when it's so obvious that I need to? There are 101 possible explanations (it's simply in my nature, it's how I was raised, it's expected within my social circle, or it's just a habit I've fallen into), and which one is most paramount, I'm still not sure.

I do know, however, that in this addiction to productivity and dismissal of downtime, I am certainly not alone. There's a strand of (in my experience, usually urban) society involved in an infectious collective madness that transforms lives into >>>

PHOTOGRAPHS: PAUL VIANI/GETTY IMAGES



“The first thing you need to do if you’re stressed and run down is sleep more and chill out. Then you’ll be ready to exercise”

nothing more nuanced than a highly competitive to-do list. As a freelancer (with many freelance friends) the lack of boundaries around working hours and workload can make it easy to overdo things. In the fitness world too, it's easy to fall for a 'nothing is ever enough' sentiment. Twice-daily training sessions while trying to juggle work and family lives becomes the norm; socialising begins to revolve around running routes and fitness buddies and all spare time is devoted to getting stronger, fitter, faster.

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

Yes, those fervent fit ones may say they love it. Perhaps they even do (I certainly did). But it's not balanced, and it's not healthy. These people are training like athletes but they aren't resting like athletes, which makes injury and illness a foregone conclusion. It's not that exercise, ambition or tireless endeavour is always unhealthy (of course not) – simply that without adequate rest and recovery time we'll be in trouble, tripping over from wellbeing into controlling, frenzied and unhealthy behaviour. These days, after a decade of running, swimming, cycling and gymming through fatigue and illness, I'm better at listening to my body and learning to rest whether it feels (psychologically) uncomfortable or not. It helps to remember the big picture – that one missed exercise session doesn't matter much in the long run – but also to allow yourself to accept the unquestionable science: if you take more rest, you perform better.

Among other more complicated factors, there's one very straightforward physiological reason for this: exercise, particularly resistance training, does not strengthen our body – it damages it, by tearing the muscle fibres. It's during the recovery *after* the exercise that those muscle fibres rebuild (stronger – adapting to stimuli so that they can handle it next time) and this is what improves endurance. The body's ability to heal is already compromised when it's in a stressed-out state (sleep-deprived or anxious), and what's more, if you've been overstressed for a while, it's likely your adrenal glands will be excreting excessive amounts of the stress hormone cortisol.

'Elevated cortisol levels as a result of stress [physical, mental, emotional, or all of the above] may increase so-called belly fat, a pattern associated with diabetes and heart disease,' says Dr Sally Norton. Yes, you read that right: stressing yourself out with too much exercise, particularly if your life is already significantly stressful, could actually make it harder for you to lose fat and give you that tired but wired feeling, all the time. That's why personal trainer and founder of Fitness Adventure Travel Rob Tynan insists that his clients (many of whom are

strung out, fatigued businessmen and women) put rest and recovery at the top of their agenda. His trips, though fundamentally aimed at helping clients improve their fitness, involve a lot of rest in-between workouts. Otherwise says Tynan: 'You just won't heal and get stronger, particularly if you've been doing tougher workouts. The first thing you need to do if you're stressed and run down is sleep more and chill out. Then you'll be ready to exercise.'

Similarly, nutritionist and psychotherapist Stephanie Moore frequently tells clients to take more 'do nothing' time and stop over-exercising. 'The body has to recover to mend and get stronger – this only happens post-training. The same is true for the brain, the blood vessels, and the digestive system,' she says. 'But if our systems are perpetually disrupted by too much stimulation – be that too much stress, too much food or drink, too much exercise – the body becomes inflamed as it is not being given the chance to calm down and recover. The longer we are in an inflamed state, then the more likely we are to trigger neurodegenerative diseases especially those triggered by the brain – such as dementia, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's – and/or causing immune over-response resulting in allergies, intolerances and auto-immune diseases.'

“The body has to recover to mend and get stronger and this only happens post-training”

RESPECT FOR REST

Clearly, the go-hard-or-go-home school of thought has its limitations, whether it's in relation to the gym, the workplace or any other area of life. But how can we begin treating rest (that costs us little more than time) with the respect it deserves? And how much physical activity should we really be doing to achieve optimal health and wellness? If you believe those most zealous fitness 'gurus', we should be sweating almost every day, pushing our bodies to the limits with frightening regularity. In fact, for most of us, less is more. I've cut down from 10+ hours per week to something more like five, and I'm performing better and enjoying training more than ever before.

If you're someone who struggles to stay on the sofa more than you have difficulty getting off it, perhaps it doesn't even matter about the science. Even if you understand the benefits of snoozing more, it can be hard to hear them properly and you'll need to take a giant leap of faith to discover the often-misunderstood benefits of rest. It's not easy either – there may be withdrawals, feeling 'not quite right', and battling your body as it craves its daily high – but in those moments of *should* do or *need* to, simply tune in and ask yourself what you really, really need. Chances are it's not a doughnut or a jog – but a healing, strengthening half-hour of doing nothing.

fitnessadventuretravel.com; Stephanie Moore (health-in-hand.com)



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STICK WITH IT

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SUPER NATURAL

The simplest combination of rosehip seed oil and rose absolute makes for my new favourite way to keep winter-cracked hands at bay. Made in England, the divine rosy scent invites repeat applications... an absolute pleasure. Mrs White's Rose Youth Serum, £25.

MAKE YOUR MOVE

I find myself more likely to be drawn down to the yoga mat if my kit fits like a glove. I love Wellicious, which uses silky lyocell (from repurposed wood pulp!) in its range – its Stay-Down leggings, £65, are a godsend when trying to master new moves.

This is the month for... taking pleasure



A recent survey intrigued me – apparently women are more likely to feel that it's absolutely necessary

to do everything in their lives perfectly, to the detriment of their own good health, whereas men are more likely to cut corners in a bid to put their wellbeing first. A to-do list is a dangerous omen hanging over one's head, weighing down the day... much better to prioritise things into 'absolutely essential', 'important', and 'nothing bad will happen if this doesn't happen' brackets. I may even add in a 'don't give a crap' category for good measure – because there really is nothing wrong with saying 'no' to stuff that stresses, upsets, or saps you of precious health and good energy. So, not a to-do list – more of a what-do-I-want-to-do? list. Tick.

Emine

Health + wellness director



Wellicious Easy
leggings, £65, and
Nicertank, £55

7TH HEAVEN

I rely on aromatherapy – to sharpen my mind at work, to soothe me to sleep, or to create calm. Aveda's Balancing Body Chakra Mists, £80 for seven, lets you pick and mix a 'prescription', as and when you waiver and wobble. It's my (alternative) first aid kit, and makes for a deeply thoughtful gift, too.

NEW KAHINA FEZ PERFUME OIL, £67/15ML, IS EXOTIC, GROUNDING, SENSUAL – LIKE A PASSPORT TO HOTTER CLIMES

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PHOTOGRAPH: CORREIS

COMING SOON • Save your relationship • Achieve your goals... & more

British perfumer Azzi Glasser is responsible for cloaking some of our biggest screen-stars in their transformative scents – moving them into the correct headspace for a role, or returning them back to their old ‘self’ once the project ends.

The fascinating thing about Glasser, who has worked for 25 years mainly as in-house perfume designer for fashion designers and brands from Agent Provocateur to Bella Freud, is that her work is necessarily chameleonic. Moving into the minds of clients involves stepping to one side herself – creating a bespoke scent for an actor, or a perfume for a fashion brand, leaves little room to impress your own agenda, beliefs or instincts onto the project. It’s deeply intimate – the perfumer must seek to embody that person, inside and out – and hugely creative; the finished story is poetry in motion: a tangible ‘experience’ that links back to the individual.

Her own story

Now it’s Glasser’s turn to share her story. Her first eponymous collection – The Perfumer’s Story by Azzi Glasser – ‘had been kept hidden in my archives knowing it would be perfect when the time was right,’ she laughs. You’ll find her all over the 11 distinctive scents from Fever 54 – ‘hedonistic and exotic’ – to Old Books, which encapsulates ‘the memory of picking up a book in my



SIGNED COPY

Azzi Glasser is the nose behind some very famous perfumes, but with *The Perfumer’s Story*, she finally steps into the limelight

grandma’s attic, and watching as it fell apart a profound and rare perfection.’ The collection also bridges the gap between off-the-peg and bespoke (a scent created by Glasser costs £15,000) as the range retails at £95/30ml.

Accessible range

It was important for Glasser to work on a new way of finding someone a signature scent that was neither prohibitive nor intimidating. ‘It’s very hard for anyone to choose a perfume from so many in a beauty hall or boutique – to know they’ve found the *right* one – especially when faced with the fragrance language of “top notes” or “it has oud in it”. This is not information consumers can necessarily relate to,’ she says. With *The Perfumer’s Story*, she moves the goalposts. Talk is no

longer of top, heart and base notes – but personality quirks and life experiences. After a morning with her, she gives me Twisted Iris – ‘creative, carefree and quirky’. I adore it, and feel that yes, this is me at my most free.

The Perfumer’s Story features 11 bottles of perfume, but also 11 ‘characters’. Glasser’s personally trained fragrance stylists (at Harvey Nichols, nationwide) are there to read you, guide you, and ultimately pair you with your happy ending – a scent that speaks to you and coaxes out those nuances of your character that are hidden away. A passport inward, as well as outward. *The Perfumer’s Story* by Azzi Glasser is a limited edition collection, available at Harvey Nichols nationwide until the end of January 2016 (harveynichols.com)





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Chocolate mousse
with raspberry
cream and
honeycomb



SPECIAL DELIVERY

A favourite, indulgent dish makes the perfect gift
to make and take when visiting loved ones

RECIPES ANNABEL CRABB AND WENDY SHARPE PHOTOGRAPHS ROB PALMER



Honey and fig
semifreddo cake >>>

>>>

Annabel Crabb is an Australian political journalist who also hosts a TV programme called *Kitchen Cabinet*, where she negotiates her way into the homes of politicians, bringing dessert – the culinary code for ‘I come in peace’. Food is a means of communication, as she says in her new book *Special Delivery*, ‘the best things ever said by food are conveyed in quiet tones, between friends and family. It’s “I care enough about you to spend a bit of time making something delicious”’. *Special Delivery* is co-authored by Crabb’s friend Wendy Sharpe who says that she learnt from Crabb that ‘cooking is not just about servicing one’s own love of tasty food... the fun part can be the thrill of giving, of helping, of sharing. And of connecting.’

The recipes in the book are ideal for this season of giving, when maybe the perfect gift for the person who appears to have everything is something uniquely thoughtful, indulgent and delicious – something you’ve made yourself with love.



READER OFFER
Psychologies readers can buy *Special Delivery* by Annabel Crabb and Wendy Sharpe (Murdoch Books, £17.99) for the special price of £14.99, including free UK postage and packing*. Call 01256 302692, quoting reference ‘GLR GE3’.

SCANDINAVIAN CINNAMON BUNS

Although best eaten warm, these cinnamon buns are good for a few hours after baking. Carry in a basket (so the warm buns don’t steam and become soggy) and cover with a clean tea towel to keep fresh *en route*.

MAKES ABOUT 12

- 1 tsp active dried yeast
- 45g caster sugar
- 200g plain flour
- pinch of salt
- 1½ tsp ground cardamom
- 1 egg
- 40g butter, plus extra melted butter for glazing
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1½ tsp ground cinnamon, plus a little extra for dusting
- 175g raisins
- icing sugar, for dusting

STEP ONE The day before, mix the yeast, 1 tablespoon of the sugar and 70ml lukewarm water in a medium bowl and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Stir in half the flour, then leave to stand for about an hour, or until roughly doubled in size.

STEP TWO In a large bowl, combine the remaining flour with the salt and cardamom. When the pre-dough is ready, add it to the flour, along with the egg. Mix until you have a dough. Put the butter between two sheets of baking paper and bash it with a rolling pin to soften. Fold the butter into the dough and knead until fully incorporated, then cover and rest for 10 minutes. Knead the dough again, then cover and rest for another 10 minutes. Repeat once or twice more, until you have a firm, smooth ball of dough. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

STEP THREE Next day, knock back the dough and turn out onto a lightly floured worksurface. Flatten into a rectangle about 25 x 10cm. Brush with the beaten egg, then sprinkle over the remaining sugar, followed by the cinnamon and raisins. Roll up the dough into a long sausage, like a Swiss roll, then cut into slices about 2cm thick – you should get about 12. Nestle the slices into a greased 23cm baking dish or tin, cover with a tea towel and leave until doubled in size, about 1-1½ hours.

STEP FOUR Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F) and sit a roasting tin on the lowest shelf. Put the buns in the oven, pour a cup of water into the tin and reduce the temperature to 180°C. Bake the buns for 10-15 minutes until golden, then turn out onto a wire rack to cool. While still warm, brush with melted butter, then dust with icing sugar and cinnamon.

*OFFER SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY

>>>



Scandinavian
cinnamon buns

>>>



CHOCOLATE MOUSSE WITH RASPBERRY CREAM & HONEYCOMB*

Perfect to make and take in pretty glass jars, this chocolate mousse is improved by adding raspberries and cream, with honeycomb shards for pure theatre.

SERVES 4

- 120g chocolate, with at least 80g dark chocolate
- 4 eggs, separated
- 1 tbsp caster sugar
- HONEYCOMB SHARDS**
- 165g granulated sugar
- 1½ tbsp runny honey
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- RASPBERRY CREAM**
- 100ml double cream
- ½ tsp vanilla paste (optional)
- 50g fresh or frozen raspberries

STEP ONE First melt the chocolate, either in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water or gently in the microwave (on medium for bursts of 30 seconds).

STEP TWO Next, whisk the egg whites to firm peaks with a tiny pinch of salt, then slowly add the sugar and keep whisking until you have stiff peaks.

STEP THREE Lightly beat the egg yolks, then add to the slightly cooled chocolate and use a whisk to combine. Gently fold in about a third of the egg whites to the chocolate mixture to loosen it, then fold in the rest. Pour into a serving dish (or small glasses) and leave to set for at least 6 hours, preferably overnight.

STEP FOUR For the honeycomb shards, line a large tray with baking paper. Combine the sugar, honey and 1½ tablespoons of water in a tall, heavy-based pan and heat until it registers 154°C (310°F) on a sugar thermometer. This is called the 'cracking stage'. If you don't have a thermometer, test by dropping a little of the syrup into a bowl of cold water and then fishing out the result: if it is still stretchy, keep cooking; if it 'snaps', it is ready.

STEP FIVE Take the pan off the heat and sift in the bicarbonate of soda. Be careful – the mixture is hot and it will foam and rise up the pan. Stir with a wooden spoon until combined, then pour it onto the baking sheet, getting it as thin as you can and smoothing it out with a spatula. Leave the honeycomb for at least 15 minutes to set. Store in a cool, dry place – but not the fridge, or it will go sticky.

STEP SIX Just before serving (or transporting), make the raspberry cream. Whip the cream and vanilla to soft peaks. Fold through the raspberries, crushing them a little as you go to give pretty red streaks, then spoon over the mousse. Break honeycomb into shards and use to decorate.



HONEY AND FIG SEMIFREDDO CAKE

This will happily travel for an hour or so in its tin, tucked inside a cool box packed with ice; promptly transfer to a colder environment at your destination. (You could substitute seasonal plums for figs.)

SERVES 8

- 200g hazelnuts, or half hazelnuts and half almonds
- 7 dried figs, hard stems snipped off, chopped
- 3 good-quality dates, pitted and chopped
- 2 tbsp coconut oil
- 2 tbsp sesame seeds
- honey and fresh figs, to decorate
- FOR THE SEMIFREDDO**
- 1 whole egg
- 6 egg yolks
- 150g blue gum (eucalyptus) honey, or whatever substitute you can muster
- 300ml whipping cream
- 150g Greek-style yogurt

STEP ONE Preheat the oven to 180°C and toast the nuts for 5-10 minutes, or until most of them look golden-brown. Rub the skins off the hazelnuts by wrapping them in a tea towel and agitating furiously.

STEP TWO Place the cooled nuts in a food processor and pulse until finely crushed, but not completely ground – there should still be plenty of chunks left. Tip the nuts into a bowl, then add the figs and dates, coconut oil and 1 teaspoon of water and pulse until the mixture is like sticky glue. Return the nuts to the food processor, along with the sesame seeds, and pulse until it looks like gravel.

STEP THREE Take a loose-bottomed 23cm round tin and cut out a circle of baking paper to fit the base, then place the lined base on a large sheet of plastic wrap. Lift up the plastic wrap and base then drop it back into your tin, so the base is lined with baking paper and the sides are lined with plastic wrap. Press in the gluey nut mixture and freeze for at least half an hour.

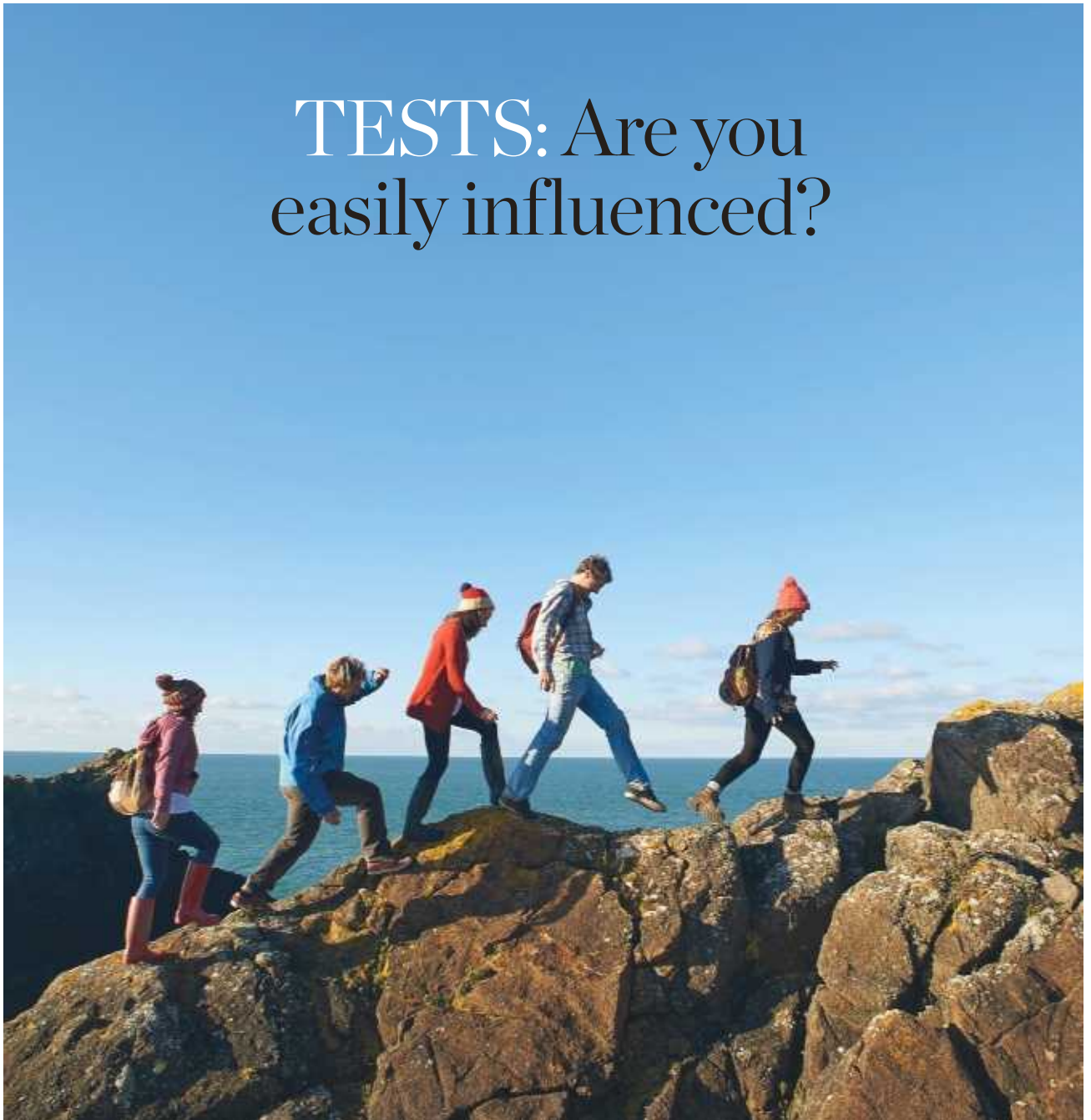
STEP FOUR For the semifreddo, put the egg, egg yolks and honey in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water. As the heat makes its way through, whisk until you have a frothy-textured sabayon – it should take about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and cool to room temperature. Whip the cream to stiff peaks.

STEP FIVE When the sabayon is cool, gently fold in the yogurt, then the whipped cream. Pour over the base and freeze for at least 4 hours. About half an hour before serving, transfer the cake to the fridge to soften a little. Drizzle with honey and serve with wedges of fresh fig.

This month on
psychologies.co.uk

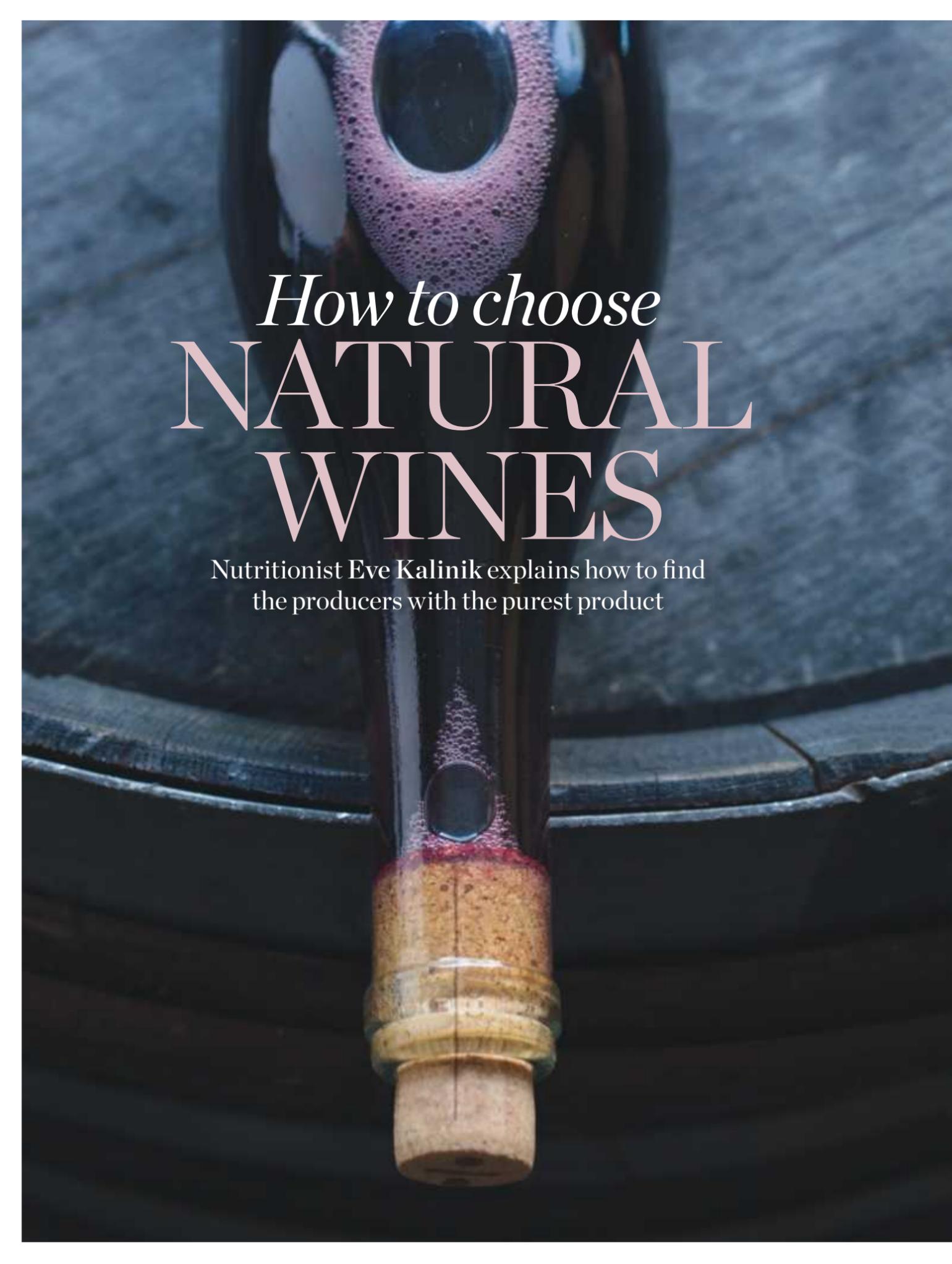
TESTS: Are you
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PHOTOGRAPH: CORBIS



PLUS: Advice from our Life Labs experts





How to choose
**NATURAL
WINES**

Nutritionist Eve Kalinik explains how to find
the producers with the purest product

January is usually the month for detoxing, dieting and being off the booze so, rather unexpectedly for this month's page, I'm taking you momentarily back on the wagon – the organic, biodynamic and natural wine-wagon.

Let's start with organic wines that you can now find in most major retailers and might assume equate to a more natural process or variety. Sadly, they may not be as pure as you think. EU-certified organic wines are permitted to include many chemical additives and a fair amount of sulphites unless they are deemed 100 per cent organic (rarely the case). The means by which a wine can be certifiably organic is largely down to the growing processes – if the grapes are grown organically then this qualifies them as such, but any number of sulphites – or sulphur chemical compounds – can be added post-harvest so they're not always as clean as they seem.

WHAT ARE SULPHITES?

With most commercial wines, synthetic sulphites are added as a mild antioxidant preservative and stabiliser. Sulphites occur naturally in many foods but, to put it in perspective, an egg contains six parts per million (ppm) as opposed to a standard wine, which contains a whopping 350ppm – and most of these will be chemical derivatives. In the wine-making process, there will be a natural conversion from grape juice to wine via fermentation that produces sulphur dioxide. However, the synthetic sulphites and other chemicals I refer to can cause strong reactions in some people. And yes, it can be much more complicated than just a heinous hangover.

Until fairly recently, wines were

made without chemical intervention and this is where more nutritious and planet-friendly wines come in. Biodynamic wines take a holistic approach to production according to the Rudolf Steiner philosophy; following phases of the moon, seasonality and using animals to enhance fertilisation of the soil to enhance the quality of the grapes. These can still legally contain up to 90ppm sulphites, so if you are sensitive you may still have a reaction.

If you want to have natural in the

“If you want natural in the truest sense, you need to opt for sulphite-free wine”

truest sense then you need to opt for sulphite-free or no-sulphite-added wines that contain only naturally-occurring sulphites, no synthetic additives or chemicals, and use minimum technological processing to preserve the goodness from the crops. Typically, these are often organic and sustainable and produced by small-scale vineyards so are also kinder to the planet.

MY TOP PICKS...



● So Lo SO2 Aurum Natura: white sulphite-free wine, £10, available at goodwineonline.co.uk. Psychologies readers can quote 'EC0215' for a 50% discount on this wine until the end of January 2016



● Terroir Bogus Tres Vacas: red natural wine, £23, boroughwines.co.uk, 020 7241 1881



● Frey Organic Sauvignon Blanc: white sulphite-free natural wine, £11.99, goodwineonline.co.uk

WHAT TO TRY?

One such vineyard, Frey Organic, based in California, has been producing biodynamic, organic and natural wines for over 30 years – these guys know how to make a decent drop! It's also worth trying the Terroir Bogus wines where producer Christophe Beau not only makes the wines organically with indigenous yeasts and with no added chemicals, but goes a step further using the most traditional treading technique and even cultivating bespoke cow hides for this process to make his Tres Vacas variety. The taste is beyond any wine I've tried.

The thing about natural wines is that there's no real definition for 'natural', so a lot of it is borne on trust between the vineyards and suppliers – you will have to do quite a bit of research. Good places to start are goodwineonline.co.uk where passionate owners John and Jane go to exceptional lengths to source the best of these award-winning wines. The Wine Rooms (<http://wineromslondon.com>) also has a great selection and similarly, the Borough Wines gang are knowledgeable and host regular fun events to showcase their selection – see <http://boroughwines.co.uk>.

evekaliniuk.co.uk

THE RETREAT } living



WARM UP

As temperatures drop outside, create an inner glow with warm colours and textures. You'll soon be feeling toasty

PHOTOGRAPHS JAMES GARDINER IMAGES FROM *CHIC BOUTIQUEURS AT HOME* BY ELLIE TENNANT

Your dream log cabin, all battered cushions and roaring fire, can be recreated anywhere, if you put your mind to it. Think about bringing warm, tonal colours and textures through your space, and you could just as easily cosy it up in a city flat as in the wilds of Wales. Match smooth, harder surfaces with a bit of rough – a bashed up sideboard or a knobbly rug. Look for reds, oranges and yellows to pitch against black brick or brown leather. Concentrate, always, on how you want your home to make you feel, and even if you're planning a sleek kitchen, you'll remember to add wood for warmth or textured tiles to soften the edges.

LEFT Warm textures make this living room cosy – with stone, wood and traditional Welsh blankets around the fire.
THIS PAGE This space feels warm through simple use of colour – yellows, oranges, and a hint of brown



THE RETREAT } living

Create winter warmth using a 'colour trio'. Choose a dominant colour from, say, some wall art, and bring it through in moveable elements like cushions and flowers that can be changed along with the seasons



Banish blinding white and steel kitchens but retain sleekness by introducing wood. Here, walnut units soften metro-style wall tiles, and black pendant lights and dark grey doors add depth



Tongue-and-groove cladding and wide oak floorboards create a simple, Shaker-style backdrop for colourful Welsh blankets and cushions. Sometimes a symmetrical look can be a little harsh, so create softness by varying either the colour or the pattern in cushions and throws





New Moon print, £35,
The Calm Gallery



Matches bottle, £10,
Loaf



Newgate Dome alarm clock, £25,
Red Candy

Magic Glaze vase, £34,
BoConcept



Groove tealight holder, £17,
BoConcept



American Modern Russel Wright cup and saucer, £26,
Eclect Design

Tom Dixon Fat Beat pendant, £285,
John Lewis



THE RETREAT } living



Alice doll, £25,
British Library Shop

Eyes embroidered cushion, £28,
Made.com



Deep soul

'I really just want to be warm yellow light that pours over everyone I love,' said singer-songwriter Conor Oberst. He creates that warm light with sound, and you can do the same with the arrangement of your space. Rusty orange, round shapes and pools of yellow light from a lamp sinking into the depth of darker spaces – this is a grown-up warmth, where you don't have to resort to chintz and florals to feel wrapped up and cared for. Sit back and take some time out for reflection, like the moon soaking up the sun's rays and turning it into something new, and changed.

Coffee table, £59.99,
Zara Home



Orange throw, £29.99,
Zara Home



Talia stool, £85,
Habitat



Danish Modern sofa, similar from £495,
Chase & Sorensen



Cold at Night Welsh wool cushions, £60 each,
Fforest General Stores



Anglepoise wall light, £95,
Design 55 Interiors



READER OFFER
Psychologies readers can buy *Chic Boutiquers at Home* for the special price of £13.99 including p&p (RRP £19.99), by calling Macmillan Direct on 01256 302699 and quoting reference 'GLR EA2'.

*OFFER SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY. FOR STOCKISTS, SEE PAGE 124

THE GOOD LIFE

This time of year, bookshops are often dominated by celebrity biographies. We've sought out some alternative versions that dig a bit deeper...





M Train

by Patti Smith (Bloomsbury, £18.99)

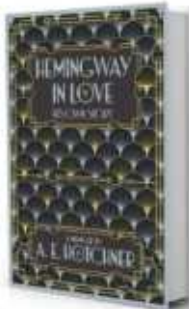
In the wonder-filled world of Patti Smith there are signs and portents everywhere. The autobiographical *M Train* is a lyrical look at a woman who accepts the world's melancholy and magic, and is determined to find inspiration everywhere, even as she's grieving for her late husband. For Smith, coffee is an essential consolation, poets are sacred and pilgrimages to Frida Kahlo's Casa Azul or Jean Genet's grave replenish her quietly suffering soul as she meditates on the best way to live life.



Mrs Engels

by Gavin McCrea (Scribe, £14.99)

Lizzie Burns is fierce, proud and poetic – lit with a determination to make the best of things, bad as they are, and enjoy herself while doing it. Gavin McCrea's fictionalised life of Frederick Engels' long-term partner portrays her as a woman of principle disguised by realism, engaged in the political struggles of the time, well-versed in the language of poverty from her days working in cotton mills and troubled by her unsettling, vital relationship with Engels.



Hemingway in Love: His Own Story

by AE Hotchner (Picador, £14.99)

'That's my regret...a four-legged regret with six sharp horns' – so says a paranoid Hemingway of the affair that shattered his first marriage, and marked his path as a hellraiser, haunted by past mistakes. Hotchner's book recreates a conversation with his friend, who was being treated in a psychiatric ward, and who bluntly reveals his emotional failings while relishing his hunting, shooting, fishing, drinking days. A clear-eyed portrait of a complex man.



Alive, Alive Oh! And Other Things That Matter

by Diana Athill (Granta, £12.99)

Diana Athill spent 50 years in publishing before retiring at the age of 75, starting a new life as a writer. Books were, and still are, her love, and at the age of 98 she is wholeheartedly engaged with the world, as this candid collection of essays shows. She recalls a miscarriage in her 40s, shares her views on love and relationships, and explains why she decided to move into an old people's home. Jam-packed with *joie de vivre*.

FIRST LINES

'In the beginning there was me. Actually, no, that's not quite right. In the beginning there was the idea of me...'

From *A Ghost's Story* by Lorna Gibb (Granta, £12.99), out now

THE BOOK THAT MADE ME

Novelist Rachel Joyce on the impact *A Passage To India* had on her younger self



'I read *A Passage to India* for A-level. I was 17, looking for something bigger without knowing what it was, feeling hemmed in by all the restraints of school, without feeling bold enough to do anything about that. Then I read this novel where the landscape is like a character, with its colours, caves and heat, where the people who are "good" may not be so good after all, where Mrs Moore (who became, in my mind, my English teacher) could say "pretty dear" to a wasp and be killed off by Forster in one simple line at the end of a chapter. I read the book over and over. Like Adela, I was searching for simple answers and what the book kept telling me was that there are many, and they're mostly contradictory. What looks like a muddle may, in truth, be a mystery.'

Rachel Joyce's *A Snow Garden and Other Stories* (Doubleday, £7.99) is out now



A Passage To India
Penguin
Essentials,
£8.99

TO BE A PILGRIM

Determined to experience a holiday with a difference, Lizzie Enfield takes to the famous Camino de Santiago pilgrim route with her two children, for eight-hour hikes, blisters and lots of laughs along the way

Kitty, my 14-year-old daughter, surprises me when she announces out of the blue that she is really looking forward to the following day. We are in Esposende, a beautiful resort on the north Portuguese coast, but it's not a swim or an ice-cream or even a chance to kayak down the River Cávado that she's looking forward to – it's the fact

that the plasters won't have to be rationed any more. 'I'll be able to put one on every single blister,' she says happily. 'Does that mean I can use all the anti-histamine then?' asks her younger brother Lucas, 11, himself covered in insect bites.

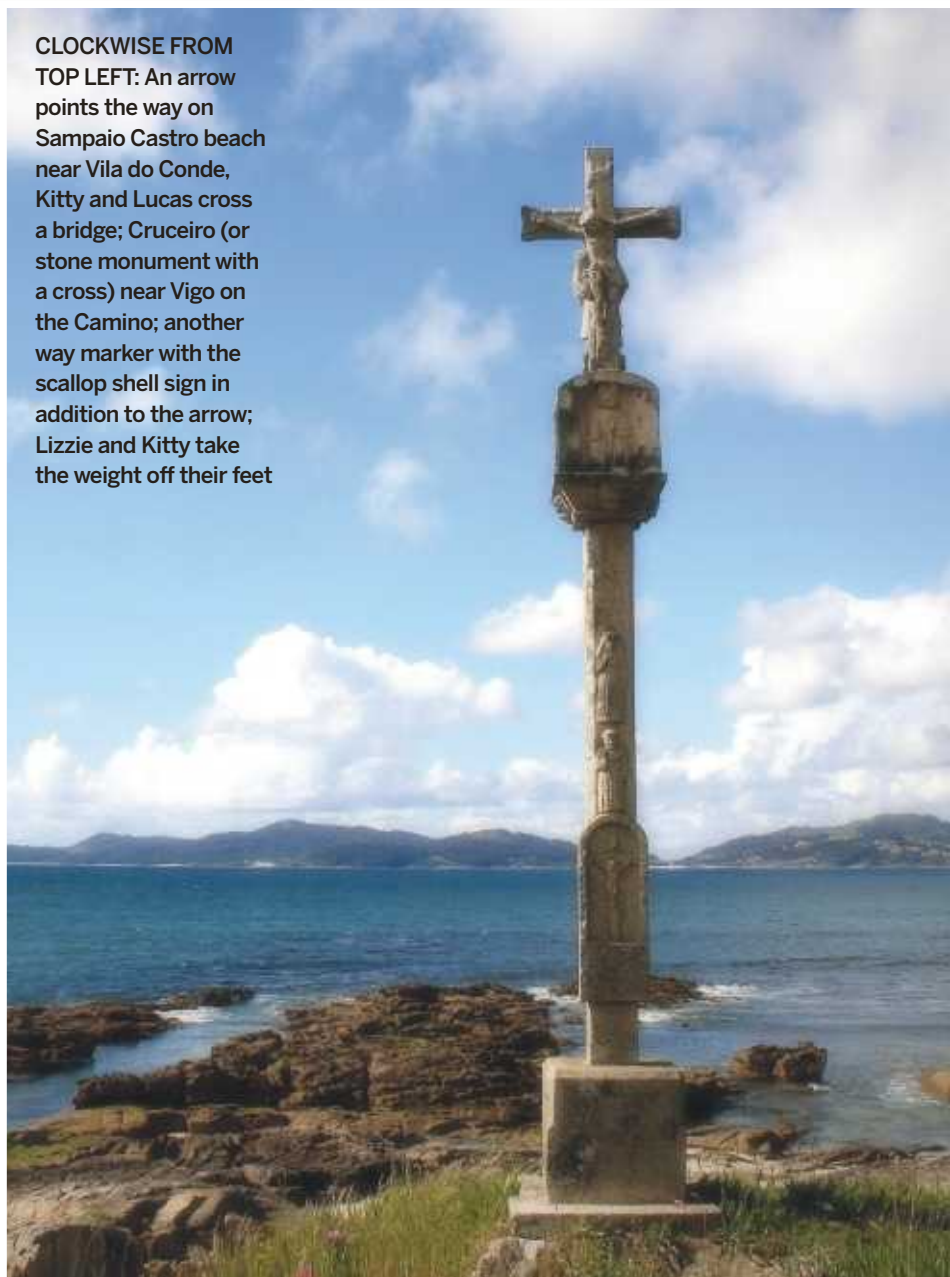
Tomorrow is our final day walking a section of the ancient Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage route from Portugal – all the routes eventually >>>

The Portuguese coastline at Baiona





CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT: An arrow
points the way on
Sampaio Castro beach
near Vila do Conde,
Kitty and Lucas cross
a bridge; Cruceiro (or
stone monument with
a cross) near Vigo on
the Camino; another
way marker with the
scallop shell sign in
addition to the arrow;
Lizzie and Kitty take
the weight off their feet



>>> converge on the Spanish city of Santiago de Compostela. We've been hiking up to eight hours and 20 miles every day. Yet in a strange way, the kids are enjoying themselves rather more than they ever have during a week at a beach resort.

We set out from the colourful city of Porto, with its UNESCO-listed Old Town and picturesque riverfront, and have walked up the north Atlantic coast, staying in fishing towns and villages along the way. The landscape and terrain has been wonderfully varied; from deserted windswept sandy beaches and rugged rocky coastal paths, to ancient cobbled pathways and deep forest tracks. And the mental terrain we've covered has been equally diverse. For every river we've crossed and mountain path climbed, we've passed through a pain, boredom or 'I'm completely losing the will to live' barrier.

Of course we've had fun, too. We've dipped in the frothy spring Atlantic, exchanged friendly 'Bom Caminos' with the farmers as we pass by their fields, visited the Porto bookshop with a fantastical staircase that inspired Hogwarts' moving ones, and feasted on an abundance of seafood.

Rising to the challenge

One of the best things – for me anyway – has been seeing the children rising to the challenge of spending all day every day just walking, and sometimes walking in pain at that.

They chat, they sing, they pretend to be making video blogs – 'We've basically been walking all day and tomorrow we are going to walk all day...' – and they look out for each other. 'Kitty, what size are your walking boots? Perhaps we could swap?' This sort of solicitousness is unheard of back home! And, as I eavesdrop, I am delighted by their quirky turns of thought.

The route is well-marked with yellow arrows. At first, these have mostly been

WHAT IS 'THE WAY'?

WHAT IS THE CAMINO WALK?

The Camino de Santiago (or The Way of St James) is the name given to the ancient European pilgrimage routes to the famous shrine of the saint in the city of Santiago de Compostela, in northwestern Spain. The most popular is from St Jean Pied de Port in France, which crosses the Pyrenees and takes in Pamplona, Burgos, León and some spectacular countryside.

WHAT IS THE PROVENANCE OF THE PILGRIMAGE?

For thousands of years, followers of many of the world's great religions have undertaken pilgrimages, leaving the responsibilities and distractions of everyday life behind to discover what is truly important. Today, the Camino still attracts people from all over the world for spiritual reasons; many also walk it for fitness or to discover natural beauty and heritage.

UK PILGRIMAGES TO TRY SOLO OR IN A GROUP

- St Cuthbert's Way follows in the steps of the Anglo-Saxon saint, for 62 miles through the Scottish borders to Lindisfarne in Northumberland.
- The Saints' Way is a stunning 27-mile walk from Padstow to Fowey in Cornwall.
- Diehard walkers can attempt the Pilgrim's Way, a 120-mile track from Winchester to Canterbury in Kent.

hand-painted on rocks or beside the road but, after a while, they became more uniform, spray-painted stencilled arrows. 'It must be a nice job, spraying arrows,' observes my son.

'I wonder if it's Banksy's part-time job?' my teenage daughter muses.

And the rest of the day is somehow easier, because we are no longer looking out for ordinary yellow arrows, but spotting 'Banksys'!

Finding the motivation

We get a bit cross with Banksy on a day when he misses an arrow at a fork in the road and we have to retrace our steps. But the kids are stoical and, even when it begins raining hard and I ask if they want to take a taxi for the final three miles, they refuse to give up – 'we're not quitters!' I was surprised when I mooted the idea that we should go on a family pilgrimage that they were both keen to do it, and also that the concept of a pilgrimage was familiar to them: 'we've studied Mecca at school.'

Many of the people we encountered along the way were, of course, on a

spiritual or religious journey, whereas for us, it was really more about doing something outside of our normal comfort zone, experiencing the rhythm of the route and having time to think.

My children have really impressed me on this adventure though – and I tell them so – by being so up for it, by coping when it was boring or difficult and by generally being great company. They have definitely scored far more points than they'd have picked up if we'd lain on a beach in Greece for a week.

We may not have had the same religious motivation as the ancient pilgrims whose footsteps we followed in but, as an exercise in family bonding and for a great sense of achievement, taking to the Camino de Santiago was definitely the way to go.

Lizzie Enfield and her two children travelled as a guest of Camino Ways (caminoways.com). To walk the Portuguese coastal route from Porto to Baiona takes six days and costs from £498 per person for accommodation, luggage transportation, guided walking notes and route maps. Easyjet (easyjet.com) flies from the UK to Porto, and there is a connecting train service with towns along the route.

Lizzie Enfield's latest novel *Living With It* (Myriad Editions, £8.99), is out now.



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Just for the weekend... heal in the city

Taking time out can be the perfect antidote to not having it all figured out, as Amerley Ollennu discovers

WHEN MY LIFE feels like it's falling apart, and I've no idea what my future holds and I'm incapable of making any decisions – I hotfoot it away on holiday. Denial, you may think as you read my go-to 'solution' but, nine times out of 10, it works. Getting physical space has a way of giving me a jolt, letting me clear my head and work things out organically, with none of the usual pressure I put on myself to have it all figured out.

As time was at a premium, I stayed close to home and booked into the Metropolitan By Como on London's Park Lane. With a reputation as the hedonistic travellers' go-to venue, this hotel has gone through a transformation of its own. The iconic Met Bar is still there but its spa has quickly become the jewel in the Como crown. Try the signature body massage – a deeply lovely cut above the standard fare (60 minutes of bliss) – or cherry-pick an

alternative therapy – Reiki, yoga, acupuncture, shiatsu, and energy therapies are some of the wellbeing experiences on offer, all led by experts in their field.

I opted for intuitive counselling with Susan King, as I had tried this style of 'therapy' in the past with startling results. Sound a little kooky to you? Well, it can be – practitioners use their intuitive nature to get to the crux of issues. However, when you see a good practitioner – and Susan is one of the best – you'll find they have the ability to very quickly uncover deep-seated anxieties and negative emotions that are holding you back from living the life you want. My session with Susan helped me examine the issues I was facing head on, with clarity and decisiveness, and helped me devise a plan of action. No running away, just big steps forward.

A session with Susan King costs £185 for 60 minutes. Rooms at The Metropolitan By Como start from £289 per night (excluding VAT).

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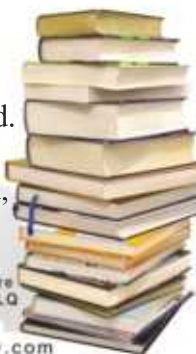
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Slow down

I AM CONSTANTLY told that I must slow down rather than doing everything at rapid speed. I read fast, I cook fast, I walk fast and I talk fast. Not that it gets me anywhere of particular interest. In fact, it's too often a hindrance, but I seem to be set to a certain velocity.

Which, now that a new year is beckoning, is perhaps the time to make a resolution to take things more slowly. Actually, it wasn't my plan at all. The universe decided to take things in hand: She didn't exactly keep quiet about it; She's been shouting Her head off all year. In the past 12 months, my mum died, my dad died, my elderly and beloved cat died, I broke my foot and then I broke my wrist. OK, universe, point taken.

The foot was a minor injury that somehow decided to transform itself into something rather more serious. 'You've been very unlucky,' the consultant said. 'This sort of thing rarely happens.' I asked what the treatment was. 'Don't walk.' See what I mean? Slow down.

Then came the inevitable hiatus of grief when people you love very much die. Time seems to move into slow motion or knock you down completely. With three deaths in quick succession, no sooner had I got up than I was back on the floor again. There is nothing rapid in mourning.

Vague hilarity spread among my friends as I turned up in a plastic boot, a plaster cast or dressed in black for another funeral. 'Sal, what have you done *now*?' Not that they lack sympathy. They couldn't be kinder – but there gets to a point when anybody would think; oh come on, seriously?

Sally Brampton is a journalist, agony aunt, and author of 'Shoot The Damn Dog: A Memoir Of Depression' (Bloomsbury, £7.99)

After five months, I was so excited that I could walk again, I went on a three-hour wander. I know, moderation in all things. Actually, my foot was fine and I had a lovely time but, the very next day, I tripped in my kitchen. As I launched on a high-dive towards the stone floor I thought, this is not going to end well. As, indeed, it didn't. I called a friend to say I thought I'd broken my wrist and could she take me to A&E? There was a long moment of stifled disbelief before she said she'd come and pick me up. So I made myself a cup of tea with my good hand (I am, after all, English) and drank it. Perhaps, she said, gently, as we sat waiting in A&E, this might be a message to stop hurtling around at 100 miles per hour?

The doctor said it was a clean break and to report to the fracture clinic the following week. After about the 10th x-ray, and much muttering behind a screen, I knew we had a problem. 'You've been very unlucky. This sort of thing rarely happens.' You don't say? Obviously, the universe has a fabulously warped sense of humour.

When I came round from the anaesthetic, I was wearing a morphine drip and an oxygen mask. The lovely nurse said it was rather a messy fracture and I should take things slowly for a while. I grinned like an idiot. God bless her, she obviously thought I was as high as a kite, but she couldn't hear Her Upstairs having a laugh. The surgeon told me they had needed to wire me together. New wiring? Brilliant! If my internal voltage could be set to low, perhaps in this new year, the heavens will go and mess with somebody else.

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